



The implementation of the Gender Perspective in the EU civilian and military missions: Leadership wanted

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Fifteen years have passed since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, through which time the EU has grown as a security actor. The keys to produce a change in implementing gender mainstreaming in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) are well known by member states; the EU and external implementation reports¹ are repeated again and again, but real change requires real willingness on the part of member states, and leadership.

Whenever a society, which suffers from underdevelopment or conflict trauma, invests in security of and participation by women, development grows at a fast pace.

It is obvious that activating the other 50% of the population is a catalyst for recovery and development in any post conflict situation. Security Council Resolution 1325 deals with the importance of protecting women, preventing any act of violence or discrimination against them and involving women in the peace and stabilisation process in their countries, in order to promote peace and development.

Crises and conflicts which directly or indirectly affect the interests of the European Union (EU) are increasingly complex and planning the strategies to prevent or to mitigate them is delayed by consensual decision-making. When military and civilian action is taken for conflict prevention and crisis management, in order to prepare the ground for long-term sustainable development, it is no longer enough to interact with civil society through local or international CIMIC activities during the execution phase of an operation; by then it is too late. This is one of the lessons learnt by ISAF in Afghanistan, and now NATO is experimenting how to integrate civilian organisations in its strategic planning from the very genesis of the concept of a mission; something that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago.

In the EU, the approach is broader as there is a wider range of tools apart from the purely military. All CSDP missions, both military and civilian, whether joint, independent or combined with other actions of the CFSP, ECHO, DEVCO, the Instrument for Stability, the EU Delegations, etc., refer in their mandate to a desired end state in which the necessary conditions for the restoration of peace and stability and further development are met.

The aim is to enable the strategic influence of external actors, through a comprehensive approach in order to benefit from synergies. But this is difficult to put in practice. Among other things, this is because it requires a change of mind-set at all levels in the structures of both civilian and military, national and international planning, which resist change if there is insufficient short-term gain.

If we add gender-mainstreaming as a requirement for politico-strategic planning, the equation becomes even more complicated, because the change of mind-set needed increases exponentially. This is partly due to structural difficulties, organisational cultures and even ideologies that have to be overcome, both individually and collectively.

These areas of difficulty or resistance can be summarised as follows:

- *Different rate of change.* Only 17 of the 28 EU members have adopted a national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The intrinsic culture of each member state causes them to interpret the level of priority differently, and therefore a different pace is applied.
- *Avoiding cultural interference.* The implementation of a gender perspective in planning for external missions clashes with the established modus operandi. Any strategic planner could refute the notion of 'women empowerment', interpreting that as triggering a shift in the culture of a society, something outside the purpose of any intervention, which therefore should not be part of the mission. But aren't we already influencing their culture, by imposing peace and development programmes offered in exchange of positive indicators?
- *Duration of the mission versus time of implementation.* CSDP missions have a mandate limited in time so if there is no follow-on strategy, through development initiatives, the efforts invested in the gender implementation measures could be unexploited or even counterproductive.
- *Rejection of an imposed strategy.* The gender perspective in civilian or military planning is not based on the traditional study of the evolution of tactics through space and time on the ground. It is a political imposition, through a series of UN resolutions² based on UNSCR 1325, supporting the theory that by investing in equality and justice, and taking the necessary protection and participation of women in conflict resolution as a centre of gravity, the outcome of any strategy will improve. For many planners, this 'top-down' intrusion in strategic planning, which directly affects the operational decision-makers, is not convincing. It does not carry the know-how of a tactical manual or Standard Operations Procedure, based on lessons learnt from the ground. There are indeed cases of good practice, but not directly related to external missions. In most cases the lack of knowledge on how to apply this approach in planning, due to a lack of training, gender advisors or just interest, leads planners to simplify the gender perspective to increasing the number of posts for women in missions, which creates confusion and even rejection. This is a grave mistake, as this is not about a new strategy at all, but a different approach to apply to any existing strategy. It is not about creating different lines of action, but reinforcing those which the Head of Mission or the Operation Commander has decided, in order to increase the effects required to achieve the desired end state of the political mission. Furthermore, the need to include more women in CSDP missions should be a means, not an end. Obviously having women in the planning teams and among staff deployed will be a multiplying factor, with greater rate in some missions than in others, but it is not

the goal of gender mainstreaming in missions and operations.

- *Perception of a political tool:* Certainly, since Beijing 1995 a number of NGOs, with different political backgrounds, have promoted the need to empower women as a centre of gravity to be taken into account in conflict resolution. This is a fact, but considering them as the owners of Resolution 1325 is a mistake.³ This wrong perception, in many cases, provokes some sort of refusal from operational leaders who link the implementation of the gender approach with particular political interests other than the efficiency of their missions.

The common factor in these areas of resistance is the need for a daunting change of mind-set in the planning of CSDP missions, in order to first understand and then accept the implementation of the gender approach.

An example can better explain the value of this perspective. Let's suppose a crisis in a country in Central Africa, in which the EU decided to intervene with a stabilisation mission, to support a democratic electoral process. Broadly, the military mission would be to provide protection to civilians during the elections by preventing violence in areas around the polling stations, proceeding with the withdrawal of arms, deterring, and if necessary as a last resort, intervening. Completely disjointed from the military mission, so as not to create confusion or partiality, a civilian mission would be responsible for monitoring the proper implementation of the electoral process according to the standards of transparency. However it could happen that women have very different security needs from that of men, as is usual in Africa, simply because they might be denied the freedom of movement to the ballot box, i.e. from camps for displaced persons. In conclusion, without an initial gender approach, the mission 'to protect the

citizens' would only have been partially met. Indeed, there would have been no violence against men who had gone to vote, but the democratic process, without the participation of half of the population, could not be declared a success or even valid.⁴

Gender mainstreaming in CSDP essentially adds a different approach. It is not a new strategy, nor a partisan subversive indoctrination, quite the contrary, is an inclusive vector. It's a matter of analysing, from the genesis of the mission, the potential advantages if we achieve that the 50% of the population with usually a greater sense of protection of the family as the group unit of society, is engaged and supports the effect that we want to produce. It is therefore a cross-cutting factor to be taken fully into account in the 'targeting' and the planning process in general, to provide an added value to the ultimate effectiveness of the mission.⁵

CONCLUSION

Last May the EU member states agreed to include in the next revision of the EEAS structures, which would be held this autumn, the establishment of a high-level function dedicated for UNSCR 1325 and gender related matters.⁶ The person appointed to this new position must lead the necessary change of mind-set, monitor at first hand the implementation of gender mainstreaming from the Crisis Management Concept for a possible mission through planning, execution, and strategic review. To this end, s/he will have to face major challenges, such as: the involvement in the appointment of senior mission personnel, the lack of qualified staff in gender approach in the various planning teams, or the training needs of operational leaders and personnel deployed for the mission. All this to be overcome under the friction from the resistance areas mentioned above. It goes without saying that the success of her/his work will not only depend on her/his own leadership, but also on the authority s/he will

be granted and the support received by the European institutions and member states.

Certainly the political momentum during this second semester of 2015 cannot be more appropriate due to two important events: the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference, and of course the final review presentation of UNSCR 1325 (2000-2015) led by UNWOMEN.

In this post-Lisbon Treaty period, the EU member states are asking for better implementation of gender mainstreaming in CSDP. The high-level function dedicated for UNSCR 1325 and gender related matters should assume leadership in a key process of change of

mentality in the planning of CSDP missions at all levels, both individually and collectively. The creation of this new political post may be just a rhetoric attempt or, if a set of coherent measures (resources, staff, training, audit capacity...) to support this figure follows, it may be the beginning of the resolution of a complex equation, which only international actors with the required capacity and management tools, such as the EU in the area of CSDP, can resolve.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Nicole Gnesotto, 'Gender mainstreaming: implementing UNSCR 1325 in ESDP missions', EUISS, 2006. <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/analy152old.pdf>

² United Nations Council Resolutions: 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122.

³ Cynthia Cockburn, 'Snagged on the contradiction', NATO, Resolution 1325 and Feminist Responses, ISIS Women, 2012. http://www.isiswomen.org/phocadownload/print/isispub/wia/wia2012/WIA2012_07TalkingPointsCynthiaCockBurn.pdf

⁴ Stephanie Groothedde, 'Gender makes sense: A way to improve your Mission', Civil-Military Centre of Excellence (CCOE), 2013.

⁵ David Kilcullen, 'Win the women, and you own the family unit. Own the family, and you take a big step forward in mobilizing the population'. Article 19 of: Twenty-eight articles; fundamentals of company-level counterinsurgency, March 2006.

⁶ EU Council Decision on CSDP of 18th May 2015, point: 17.c <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/05/18-council-conclusions-csdp/>