THE DOSSIER

Domestication+: The Fifth U.K. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security

By Katharine A.M. Wright, Toni Haastrup, and Roberta Guerrina

Executive Summary

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is a global normative and policy framework adopted in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and encapsulated in nine follow-up resolutions to date. It represents the culmination of many years of organizing, particularly by civil society organizations (CSOs). The intentions of states to implement the WPS agenda are often articulated in National Action Plans (NAPs) that outline states' strategic priorities and are intended to set out measurable actions to be pursued by a range of actors at both the national and transnational levels to advance women's empowerment and participation in security processes.

One of the innovations of the new iteration of the United Kingdom's NAP — which is updated every two years — is its joint ownership between the U.K. Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence.

Importantly, this NAP attempts, in part, to respond to a broader critique about externalization of WPS in the Global North and ensure greater coherence across the domestic institutions responsible for U.K. foreign policy. To meet WPS obligations through this NAP implementation, members of civil society serve as important knowledge brokers to hold implementers accountable. Indeed, they have also been instrumental in keeping the agenda alive and driving the calls for greater domestication in the Global North.

Additionally, transnational challenges are increasingly being addressed within NAPs, and the latest U.K. iteration is no exception. In the context of the United Kingdom, tackling these security challenges, which straddle the domestic and international, is the responsibility of the national and devolved governments. These include challenges such as global health risks and cybercrime, which are sources of insecurity already established by the U.K. government. And although cybersecurity is a reserved matter, the devolved governments also have responsibilities and frameworks to ensure that the U.K. remains

An International Women's Day sign is seen as a woman knocks on the door of No. 10 Downing St., London, in March 2023. International Women's Day is a focal point for the women's rights movement, focusing attention on important issues. (Leon Neal / Getty Images)

secure in cyberspace. This further underscores why WPS application must consider the remit and competencies of the four nations, i.e., domestication.

The new NAP also focuses on internal measures, such as enhancing women's experiences in the armed forces, and external measures, such as implementing a gender perspective across defense activities. This is an innovation. The NAP's language, however, remains primarily focused on women, whereas terminology more inclusive of LGBTQ persons would be more appropriate. A more progressive outlook on defense could mean the United Kingdom taking a leadership role within NATO via the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives.

Finally, there is a tension between the participation and protection of women that persists within the WPS universe. Yet, as has been demonstrated by feminist scholarship, the nexus between the two must be acknowledged to fulfill implementation obligations, and in such a way that when gender perspectives are brought in, they do not serve to infantilize women, especially.

Policy Recommendations

1. Commit to legislating WPS to ensure that the implementation of the WPS agenda in the United Kingdom is a legal duty.
2. Consult on WPS across the four nations, an essential step for full domestication.
3. Fund civil society's participation and engagement throughout the process to diversify input into policymaking and implementation.
4. Commit to a leadership role within the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives.
5. Develop a detailed strategy for dealing with cyber and online insecurity, an essential step toward meeting WPS obligations globally.
6. Increase the focus on Gender, Peace, and Security to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling new and emerging security challenges.

MAY 2023

THE DOSSIER

Domestication+: The Fifth U.K. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security

By Katharine A.M. Wright, Toni Haastrup, and Roberta Guerrina

NEW LINES INSTITUTE
FOR STRATEGY AND POLICY

Table of Contents

Executive Summary . . . . . Front Page

Policy Recommendations

Introduction 3

The Evolution of a Global Gender Norm 3

Domestication of WPS in the U.K. Context: Evaluation of the New NAP 5

The Role of Civil Society in NAP Production 7

Making WPS a Priority for Transnational Security Challenges: The Example of Cybersecurity 8

Defense 9

Where Are the (Wo)men? Protection, Participation, and a Gender Perspective 10

Challenges and Opportunities for WPS in the U.K. 12

Recommendations 12

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and not an official policy or position of the New Lines Institute.

COVER PHOTO: The U.N. Security Council debates the topic of women, peace, and security. The October 2015 meeting in New York City reviewed the implementation of UNSCR 1325 — the first security council resolution to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women. The resolution was adopted on Oct. 31, 2000. (Luiz Rampelotto / Pacific Press / LightRocket via Getty Images)

The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy

Our mission is to provoke principled and transformative leadership based on peace and security, global communities, character, stewardship, and development.

Our purpose is to shape U.S. foreign policy based on a deep understanding of regional geopolitics and the value systems of those regions.

Introduction

In February 2023, the United Kingdom released the fifth iteration of its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) for 2023-2027. The announcement, and the document more specifically, reflect the U.K.'s ambition to be at the forefront of states implementing this policy framework for advancing the rights and empowerment of women globally. In 2006, the U.K. became one of the first countries to adopt a comprehensive NAP and since has consistently championed the WPS agenda in international settings through a process of updates and revisions in 2010, 2014, and 2018. Cementing the U.K.'s position at the vanguard of this agenda, it is also a penholder for WPS at the U.N. Security Council, meaning it often initiates and drafts resolutions.

NAPs are an integral part of the WPS agenda first articulated in U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and encapsulated, to date, in nine follow-up resolutions. The eventual realization of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 was far from a *fait accompli* and built on decades of organizing by women in and around the United Nations, especially by members of civil society organizations (CSOs) who have championed the NAPs. Indeed, the NAPs represent the implementation phase of the WPS agenda. They outline states' strategic priorities and are intended to set out measurable actions to be pursued by a range of actors at the national and transnational level to advance women's empowerment and participation in security processes.

The Evolution of a Global Gender Norm

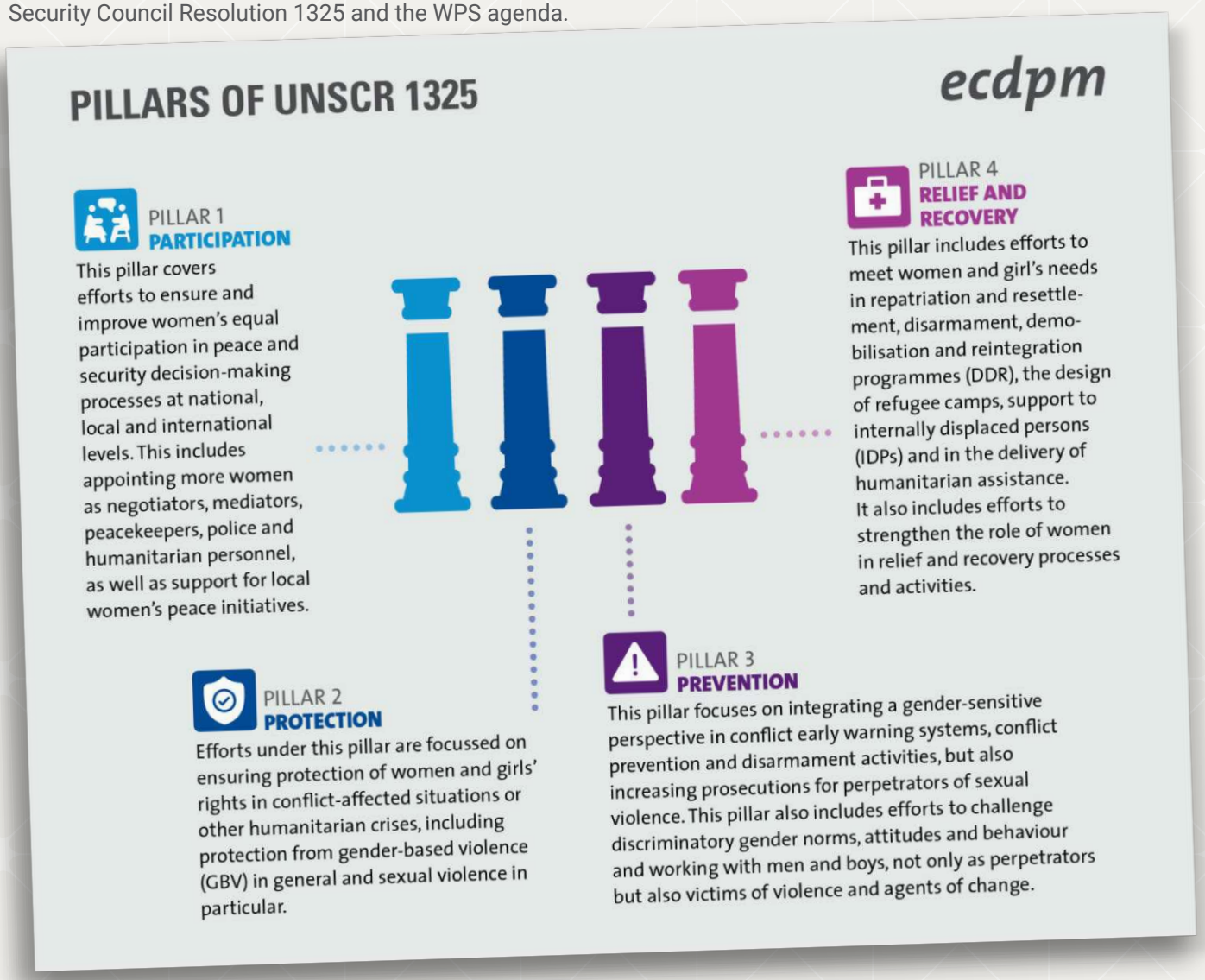
The adoption of UNSCR 1325 marked the first time the Security Council had acknowledged the relevance of gender to peace and security, although discussion between civil society and U.N. member states had been taking place for many decades on the topic. This included discussions at the U.N. World Conferences on Women held every five years between 1975 and 1995, and culminated in the Beijing Platform for Action, which went further than UNSCR 1325 in prioritizing conflict resolution and demilitarization.

Four pillars underpin the WPS agenda: 1) increasing women's participation in all levels of decision making; 2) supporting the role of women in conflict prevention; 3) protecting the rights of women during and post-conflict; and 4) ensuring relief and recovery are addressed through a gender lens.

Based on these pillars, the WPS agenda has tended to acknowledge the gendered impact of conflict, i.e., its often-negative consequences on women and girls. At the same time, it has called attention to women's agency, including in conflict and post-conflict settings. Among other concerns have been the attempt to address gender-based issues such as conflict-related

Implementing the WPS Agenda

This chart, from the European Centre for Development Policy Management, details four pillars for executing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and the WPS agenda.



Source: ECDPM [Discussion Paper No. 245: Rhetoric and real progress on the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Africa, Page 8; by Desmidt and Davis]

sexual and gender-based violence and to identify the gendered dimensions of countering violent extremism.

While the precarious situation of civilians the world over has meant that the WPS agenda has tended to focus on women, it is important to stress that the WPS should not be considered a "women's issue." By calling attention to the necessity of a gender perspective in the international political arena, WPS and its advocates seek to tackle the traditional hierarchies that have privileged the perspectives and experiences that are masculinized over those that are feminized wherever they occur.

It's important to keep in mind this context and the grassroots origins of the WPS agenda to understand some of the recent critiques of the ways the agenda has evolved over the past 20 years. If the purpose of the WPS agenda is to disrupt and challenge hierarchies, then the tendency of countries in the Global North to assume a masculinized posture over those in the Global South, which are positioned as feminized, should be examined in more detail. In this context, and despite the global agenda of WPS, Global North countries view the challenges the agenda is intended to tackle as a problem for the Global South.

> “[The NAP] attempts to carve a more prominent role for the U.K.’s defense apparatus as a way to demand greater accountability on WPS implementation within the U.K., not just from external partners.”

The latest U.K. NAP is jointly owned by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Ministry of Defence (MoD). Another welcome formulation in this NAP is the designation of departmental leads for particular actions. While the 2023 NAP retains characteristics from previous iterations, such as the external-facing emphasis on specific “focus countries,” which are reflective of the U.K.’s broader geopolitical interests, it also makes claims to prioritizing domestication.

The U.K.’s fifth NAP attempts, in part, to respond to this broader critique about externalization of WPS in the Global North. Moreover, it also seeks to ensure greater coherence across the domestic institutions responsible for U.K. foreign policy. This has manifested in four key ways. First, it attempts to “domesticate” WPS for the U.K. context. Second, it emphasizes the role of civil society within the U.K.’s WPS ecosystem. Third, it brings WPS to bear on transnational security challenges that blur the line between domestic and international. And finally, it attempts to carve a more prominent role for the U.K.’s defense apparatus as a way to demand greater accountability on WPS implementation within the U.K., not just from external partners.

Domestication of WPS in the U.K. Context: Evaluation of the New NAP

For many years, the WPS global community of practice has advocated for the localization of the agenda, especially in relation to countries of the Global South, as the most effective means of realizing the promise of the WPS agenda for all. In recent years, a parallel call has occurred in relation to countries of the Global North — to domesticate. Localization assumes domestication, yet this has been a gap in the U.K.’s WPS approach. Domestication is about applying the WPS lens to issues that have domestic salience, such as gender-based violence that exists outside of conflict, support for refugees and asylum-seekers, and human trafficking, among other concerns. In a way, it is a call to rethink the boundaries of security to understand how insecurity sits at the juncture between the private, the public, and the international.

Domestication has been especially relevant as greater attention is given to transnational security challenges, such as climate change and cybercrime. The new NAP represents the first time WPS has been on the domestic agenda in the U.K., while countries like Canada and Ireland have been quicker to domesticate.

The NAP states that domestication “will increase policy coherence and therefore our ability to deliver for women and girls. Foreign and domestic policy do not operate in isolation and the gender impacts of transnational issues such as migration will benefit from closer cross-government working.”

Unlike Ireland, but perhaps similar in some ways to Canada, with its many provinces, some with distinct constitutional settlements, the composition of the U.K. provides a particular set of challenges for the implementation of WPS. Composed of four countries (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), each with a distinct context for how they deal with gender concerns, the U.K.’s constitutional settlement reflects the complex history of the union. This has, in turn, had implications for what is prioritized at the domestic level as well as the degree of coherence desired as a result of domestication.

The current NAP, despite the positive move toward domestication, is a highly centralizing document, meaning that it does not account for the different

Hundreds of people gathered at a vigil for Sarah Everard in London on March 13, 2021. Everard was walking to her south London home when she was kidnapped, raped, and murdered by an off-duty police constable. The vigil was also a call to end violence against girls and women perpetrated by men. (Kristian Buus /In Pictures via Getty Images)

challenges faced by the U.K. constituent countries. Presently, there is a sense of an England-centric NAP. For example, while transnational challenges drive the domestication dimension of this NAP, WPS is still relevant to Northern Ireland as a conflict-affected country in a U.K. domestic setting. Consequently, while it makes particular sense that the London-based and mainly externally facing MoD and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office have joint responsibility for the implementation, including domestication, of WPS vis-à-vis this NAP, the roles of the devolved governments and civil service are not as clear. This is especially true for Scotland and Wales, which are not mentioned.

There is also the issue of uneven capacities among the four nations. Whereas England, Wales, and Scotland all have a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, this is not the case for Northern Ireland. Tackling VAWG is a low-hanging fruit to demonstrate the implementation of WPS, which is perhaps why it is a central task of the new NAP. Yet while the Northern Ireland Assembly is not sitting, due to the Democratic Unionist Party's refusal to enter power sharing (part of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement) because of their concerns over the Brexit Protocol, the provisions cannot be adopted into law without the politically fraught enforcement of direct rule.

At the same time, the Republic of Ireland's investment in Northern Ireland has contributed in part to the community of practice around the agenda. In Scotland, WPS is less institutionalized, although not absent. For example, the Scottish government under former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon supported the Women in Conflict 1325 Fellowship three times since 2016. The fellowship brings together women with a range of experiences of conflict and is hosted

> “ ... a NAP is one way a state can demonstrate a commitment to the [WPS] agenda. Creating NAPs responds directly to the U.N. Security Council’s call in 2004 for states to develop NAPs. ”

by the CSO Beyond Borders, with a focus on cultural exchanges and international dialogue. Aside from this, it is only recently that attempts have been made to embed WPS as the Scottish government has begun to explore feminist foreign policy. In Wales, there is hardly a community of practice around WPS, with the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, via Academi Heddwch Cymru (Welsh Institute for Peace), seeking to develop more on WPS and its implications for the country.

In short, the NAP does not sufficiently develop the operationalization of a domestic WPS agenda, and this becomes evident outside of devolution. The focus on Northern Ireland is important but runs the risk of reaffirming the boundaries of WPS as a “conflict”-centered agenda.

Prior to the conclusion of the most recent NAP, many WPS analysts had made the point that the U.K.’s migration regime under the jurisdiction of the Home Office should also align with the ambitions of a domestic application of WPS. The new NAP thus tasks the Home Office with “tackling violence against women across borders” through the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme. This scheme provides support for migrant victims of domestic abuse with insecure immigration status. Yet this position seems at odds with the U.K.’s current “hostile environment” approach to immigration, which directly creates gendered vulnerabilities for migrants in the U.K. In the current carceral environment, migrants with irregular status who encounter law enforcement are more likely to see their immigration status prioritized over their safety and security. This case study from Southall Black Sisters exemplifies the approach:

> S’s husband threatened to kill and attempted to strangle her. He then left her stranded. She was supported by a specialist women’s service to report her experience to the police, but instead of investigating her report they appeared to be more interested in her immigration status. They asked her questions about her immigration status causing her to panic and become distressed. Officers had to be reminded that their priority was to assist her as a domestic violence victim and not to police her immigration status. They have taken no further action against the perpetrator.
>
> *(Southall Black Sisters, extract from “Women Living in a Hostile Environment” report by End Violence Against Women.)*

The current U.K. regime could thus be seen to run counter to the Istanbul Convention, which came into force in the U.K. in November 2022. The convention states that all women should be protected from violence, irrespective of their immigration status, specifically in relation to Article 59.

The Role of Civil Society in NAP Production

As knowledge brokers of WPS, civil society members are crucial to keeping the agenda alive and holding those implementing it accountable, from states to regional and international organizations. CSOs have been the most influential in the push for the proliferation of NAPs globally and have informed all five of the U.K.’s NAPs, especially the drive toward greater domestication.

A lack of a NAP does not necessarily equate to a lack of commitment to implement the WPS agenda. However, an NAP is one way a state can demonstrate a commitment to the agenda. Creating NAPs responds directly to the U.N. Security Council’s call in 2004 for states to develop NAPs.

Women cycle over Westminster Bridge during the London Cycling Campaign Women's Freedom Ride on March 5, 2023. The London Cycling Campaign is calling for the city to be made safer for women cyclists ahead of International Womens Day. (Photo by Hollie Adams/Getty Images)

The concept of NAPs has been subject to increasing critique at a normative level and in relation to their operationalization in terms of local ownership. However, NAPs are generally accepted as good practice since Security Council resolutions fail to provide specific guidelines for their implementation. Importantly, NAPs allow each state to localize or domesticate WPS based on their own particular context. Further, in outlining the state's own understanding of the WPS agenda, it provides an important mechanism to hold governments to account for their (in)actions.

The CSOs constitute a significant part of the WPS community of practice in the U.K. Many of the most active are, however, clustered in London with close relationships to the seats of power in Whitehall and Westminster. Arguably, the most prominent of these is the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), a membership network of U.K.-based civil society organizations working to coordinate a strategy for WPS in the U.K. and several international partners. In addition to being a CSO clearinghouse, GAPS acts as the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace, and Security registered in 2006. Similarly, Women's Platform acts as the secretariat of the All-Party Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace, and Security, established in 2011 for the Northern Ireland Assembly, and it is a member of GAPS. Indeed, civil society in Northern Ireland has been crucial to keeping WPS on the agenda given the precarity of governance over the last few years. Neither Scotland nor Wales are represented within GAPS and have no equivalent secretariat in Edinburgh or Cardiff. Given the crucial role of civil society in relation to implementation and accountability, the fact that Scottish and Welsh civil society have not really picked up WPS raises concerns about the prospects of domestic coherence around this agenda. Building civil society in these devolved contexts would be essential to a holistic domestic WPS agenda.

Making WPS a Priority for Transnational Security Challenges: The Example of Cybersecurity

In recent years, the U.K. has identified new transnational security challenges that bridge the domestic/international divide. Some of the most prominent challenges include serious and organized crime, climate change, global health risks, and cybersecurity. How WPS applies in each context is important.

Transnational challenges are already significant across all devolved governments to varying degrees. Climate change potentially ranks the highest on the agenda for all, in part due to the varying capabilities and competencies of each government. And while global health risks rank high due to the pernicious impact of COVID-19, the U.K. government has also positioned cybercrimes as an urgent security threat.

Cybersecurity is a reserved matter of national security; the devolved governments nevertheless have varying degrees of responsibility. In Scotland, cybersecurity ambitions emphasize the importance of cyber resilience within a whole of the U.K. cybersecurity framework. In Wales, the emphasis has been on promoting cyber industry and using its skills to protect critical infrastructure through collaboration with U.K. intelligence and national security apparatus.

Scholarship on the intersections of cyberspace and WPS have argued that cyberspace tends to amplify the gendered insecurities found in the real world. However, while the most recent NAP acknowledges the transnational challenges of cyber-insecurity, it is thin on implementation. Concretely, the new NAP commits to continued support of women professionals in the context of the U.K.-Gulf Women in Cybersecurity Fellowship Programme, which seeks to address the skills shortage in the Gulf. This NAP misses the opportunity to connect, for example, the commitment to eradicating the domestic skills gap, as identified in the Scottish framework, to WPS. Moreover, where feminist cybersecurity analysts have identified the role of the cyberspace in amplifying conflict, this is not addressed in the new NAP. Overall, then, there is a clear gap between what the challenge is and the U.K.'s commitments to tackling it.

Defense

A third innovative dimension of the new NAP is the attention given to defense, which is one of the most challenging areas to engage in with respect to WPS, given the tension between the broader normative aspirations behind WPS emanating from civil society to end war and the reality of the role of defense as an actor in peace and security. The fifth NAP represents a step forward in seeking to navigate such tension, and a significant step forward in terms of attention to, and action on, WPS and defense. A measure of this is the inclusion for the first time of MoD-specific consultations with civil society, which comes with a particular set of challenges for military actors but, if done right, has the potential to foster more inclusive visions of WPS in this space.

In defense, there can be a tendency to focus on the internal aspect (often understood as the recruitment of women), at the expense of the external aspect (the implementation of a gender perspective across defense activities, including at a tactical and operational level). Importantly, the recruitment of women should not be based on a false assumption that they bring something "different" to enhance operational effectiveness (the external aspect), given women sign up to the same institutional values as men. Rather, women's inclusion and efforts to enhance it should be premised on an acknowledgment that the armed forces should be reflective of the society they represent.

On the internal aspect, the U.K. NAP provides a list of measures to address women's experiences of the armed forces. For example, the inclusion of a survey of harassment is a positive step, acknowledging the barriers to reporting sexual violence within the armed forces. Significantly, the delivery plan includes the following task for the MoD, which acknowledges the lived experience of many women in the armed forces:

> **Enhance the day-to-day experience of women in the Armed Forces through the implementation of policies and initiatives to tackle women's health and wellbeing issues (such as urination, menstruation, breastfeeding and menopause) and access and needs issues (such as childcare and improved equipment e.g., combat uniform and body armour).**

The focus on women is welcome, but more could be done to make this language inclusive of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) – also known as having diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics – and reflects again the unrealized aspirations of this NAP we have noted elsewhere.

That notwithstanding, the issues outlined are something that NATO, through what is now the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP), has been concerned with for decades. This therefore represents an opportunity for the U.K. to lead the way among NATO allies in best practices on providing for women in their armed forces to ensure force readiness, with the NCGP — as a unique committee composed of NATO members plus partners — providing an ideal forum for the U.K. to do so.

Engagement of the MoD with NATO's gender perspectives panel would support another action of the NAP to:

> **Increase strategic engagement with Allies to strengthen international support for driving progress on WPS and Human Security at NATO, including through implementation of NATO's WPS Action Plan and the Strategic Concept.**

This would also bring together the internal (women's participation) and external (gender perspective) dimension of implementing WPS in defense.

On the external aspect, the NAP's actions in relation to defense are limited and relate primarily to human security. A key challenge for the U.K. in the implementation of WPS in defense is the subsumption of WPS under the umbrella of human security within the MoD in Joint Service Publication 985 "Human Security in Defence." This is not to say that there is not relevant overlap and complementarity between the two agendas (e.g., NATO's Special Representative on WPS also heads its Human Security Unit), but that this should not be assumed. WPS was built on decades of feminist organizing, while human security as it was originally conceived was gender blind. Careful attention needs to be given to how these elements work together and to ensure a gender-blind approach to human security is not pursued at the expense of WPS. Elsewhere, the NAP refers to supporting other militaries with integrating gender and human security into doctrine. By naming gender and human security as related tracks, the document draws attention to the institutional complexity of bringing WPS into new departments and/or policy domains.

Where Are the (Wo)men? Protection, Participation, and a Gender Perspective

Cynthia Enloe, a world leading professor of international relations, calls on us to think about how the positionality of men and women in the context of everyday insecurities is directly linked to the politics of representation. Moreover, as academic experts Aisling Swaine and Catherine Turner argue, women's participation without their protection is impossible, and their protection is also impossible without their participation.

In the context of the new U.K. NAP, the tension between participation and protection remains unresolved. The case of Northern Ireland clearly shows the importance of acknowledging the nexus between the participation and protection of women, and how the two are co-constitutive. However, this should not be the only focus of action. More pointedly, while reference is made in a number of places to the inclusion of a gender perspective and the importance of gender responsiveness, the focus of the NAP is overwhelmingly on women, and thus gender is framed as synonymous with women.

As academic expert Columba Achilleos-Sarll points out, the visual reproduction of WPS also provides an important tool for understanding the meaning projected through NAPs. Her analysis identifies four subject positions within the U.K. NAPs (prior to the latest iteration). These are "the 'agential woman-in-conflict' (hypervisible), the 'international community' (visible), the 'woman-as-victim' (absent presence), and 'men and boys' (invisible)." A reading of the fifth NAP suggests it does not depart from these visualizations of WPS by the U.K. Nor is the domestication of the NAP reflected in its visualization. The U.K. is not an exception here among NAP-producing countries located in the Global North, with a tendency in their visual depictions to enact gendered and racialized hierarchies. As Toni Haastrup and Jamie Hagen point out:

> "... to justify WPS intervention, the agenda as evidenced by NAPs further minoritizes women vis-a-vis the Global North. Yet, it is worth remembering that, globally, these women are not minorities. Minoritizing women of color in global politics is an active practice linked to histories of violent oppression and one which WPS risks reproducing."

The visualization of the U.K. NAP launch through digital diplomacy on Twitter provides another insight into how the U.K. wants to be perceived to be doing WPS. The FCDO's tweet to mark the launch was noticeable for its color choices, pink being a feminized color, in addition to the focus on a headline on the protection of "women and girls," missing reference to women's agency and the importance of their participation.

There are a number of other areas that lack focus in the NAP and are in danger of reinforcing essentialized stereotypes and the gender binary. One reference is made in the whole NAP to "masculinity" (singular), belying the reality of masculinities (plural). This represents a missed opportunity to address the relationship of men to the WPS agenda. As David Duriesmith has argued:

Word Cloud Based on the U.K.'s 2023–2027 National Action Plan

This word cloud demonstrates the discursive focus of the NAP by extracting the "key words" that have been given prominence in the document, with "women"/"woman" being the most dominant variation in comparison to, for instance, "men" or "men and boys." Moreover, it often the case that "gender," which also has a high occurrence, is associated primarily with "women" and in some cases "women and girls."

Source: Dr. Katharine Wright (word cloud created with NVivo software, the phrase "Women, Peace, and Security" was excluded)

© 2023, The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy

The reticence to talk about men directly has meant that the impact of violence committed by men has remained in central focus on WPS, while little attention has been paid to what men or masculinities have to do with causing it. This imprecision presents distinct challenges for an agenda which hopes to engage men in achieving its goals, without first having established their relationship to violence or oppression.

The fifth NAP also includes reference to LGBTQ people for the first time — a welcome inclusion for some, but at no point does it define the term. Nor is this reflected in the indicators, which continue to focus on a binary understanding of gender, thus failing to capture violence against the LGBTQ population. As with the reference to "masculinity" (singular), the intent to be more inclusive is evident, but it is not followed through on in sufficient detail.

Challenges and Opportunities for WPS in the U.K.

The WPS agenda has been growing in significance as a global agenda for mainstreaming gender in areas of security and defense. States from the Global South have been instrumental in keeping the agenda alive today. However, there are marked differences between demands by donors to Global South countries to localize and use WPS as a way to develop a more detailed understanding of the violence-security continuum.

While other Global North countries have heeded the call to do more to domesticate WPS, the U.K. has been slower to embrace that principle. For example, in the United States, WPS commitments were legislated through the 2017 Women, Peace and Security Act. Although a Private Members Bill on WPS proposed by Baroness Fiona Hodgson is currently making its way through the U.K. Parliament, the NAP remains at present the only vehicle toward domestication.

In writing this Dossier, the authors have been conscious to avoid a London-centric WPS focus since the U.K. does have three other capitals: Belfast, Cardiff, and Edinburgh. Yet it is clear that resourcing and WPS networks very much coalesce in England, specifically London, partly because most peace and security issues remain within Westminster's domain. While progress has been made on domestication, the U.K.'s NAP could go further in addressing the participation and protection nexus, being inclusive of LGBTQ persons and considering the role of men and masculinities in WPS.

Recommendations

1. **Commit to legislating WPS.** A serious commitment to domestication would mean support by U.K. members of Parliament for the Private Members Bill on WPS, thus making the implementation of the WPS in the U.K. a legal duty. Legislating WPS will also ensure that consistent funding is required to implement the U.K.'s WPS aspirations, as outlined in the NAP and as essential public policy.

2. **Consult on WPS across the four nations.** A more thorough mapping of what the WPS domestic agenda means across the four nations and how to integrate it into their distinct gender regimes is essential to ensuring policy coherence. This is a job for the FCDO and potentially the Home Office. Relatedly, it is essential that devolved governments, legislatures, and local civil society feed into the implementation of the NAP. Through consultation with civil society in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, there can be greater ownership of the agenda. A start would be to host informational events and consultations on the NAP's implementation outside London.

3. **Fund civil society's participation and engagement throughout the process.** The consultation of civil society in the drafting of the NAP allows for the inclusion of a diverse range of voices and interests in the implementation process. Participation and engagement, however, are costly both in terms of financial and human resources. To diversify participation, it is therefore essential for the government to ensure funding is available for a range of CSOs across the four nations to engage in the consultation and evaluation process.

4. **Commit to a leadership role within the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives.** The U.K. has made significant strides on WPS and defense, and the NATO gender committee is the preeminent forum for sharing lessons among allies, providing an excellent opportunity for the U.K. to assume a leadership role in an international setting as a WPS champion and to further develop its own approach.

5. **Develop a detailed strategy for dealing with cyber and online insecurity.** The growth of digital violence is one of the challenges for practitioners looking at the various manifestations of gender-based violence. This site of violence and insecurity remains under-researched, and its impact on individuals is still not fully understood. From cybersecurity to online radicalization and misogyny, WPS needs to account for this new form of insecurity and the way it transcends the public-private divide. It is thus essential that the government develop a plan of action for tackling this challenge.

6. **Increase the focus on Gender, Peace, and Security to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling**

new and emerging security challenges. While WPS provides an entry point for understanding the gendered impact of conflict and insecurity, it still draws on a notion of gender that reifies binaries. By shifting from "women, peace and security" to "gender, peace and security," space is created for a more comprehensive assessment of the way gender norms shape insecurity. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to move from a focus on women, all too often still framed as victims, to masculinities and gender hierarchies. Gender, peace, and security provides an opportunity to work at the intersections among public, private, national, and international.

Dr. Katharine A. M. Wright is Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University (U.K.). Her research focuses on gender and security at NATO, including the alliance's engagement with the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. She is broadly interested in WPS and defence, how militarised understandings of WPS influence its transformative potential; and how NATO's engagement with WPS is projected through strategic narratives and received in popular culture. Her research has informed workshops, training, and briefings for various NATO bodies, governments, and non-governmental organisations. Dr Wright is a co-convener of Newcastle's Military, War and Security Research Group and is a member of the Northumbrian Universities Military Education Committee (2018-24).

Toni Haastrup is a full professor in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Stirling. Her current research explores issues in Africa-EU relations, feminist foreign policy, and the politics of knowledge production and race within the Women, Peace and Security agenda - she has published widely in these areas. Haastrup is a 2022 recipient of the Flax Foundation's Emma Goldman Award, which honors substantial contribution and engagement to feminist knowledge making in Europe. She has provided reports, briefings, and rapid analysis for several international organizations and government departments.

Roberta Guerinna is Professor in Politics and Director of the Gender Research Centre at the University of Bristol and is co-founder of EQUAL In-Sight, an interdisciplinary project seeking to develop a holistic approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion in organizations. Roberta researches the politics of gender, with a particular interest in EU politics, policy making processes and gender mainstreaming. She published Mothering the Union, a comprehensive overview of maternity rights provisions in the EU, and her work has appeared in numerous journals.

Contact

For media inquiries, email media@newlinesinstitute.org

To submit a piece to the New Lines Institute, email submissions@newlinesinstitute.org

For other inquiries, send an email to info@newlinesinstitute.org

1776 Massachusetts Ave N.W. Suite 120
Washington, D.C. 20036

(202) 800-7302

Connect With Us

@newlinesinst | @New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy | Subscribe | Sign up

NEW LINES INSTITUTE
FOR STRATEGY AND POLICY