The importance of Gender in ESDP

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Nearly seven years after the first internationally binding agreement relating to women and security, and gender perspectives - UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) - how much has changed? This article examines implementing gender mainstreaming in the EU context of European Security and Defence Policy and explains why it is important at both strategic and operational level.

Gender and mainstreaming

This article discusses gender mainstreaming specific to the framework of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) planning and missions, the practicalities and benefits of implementing gender-sensitive policies. First, it is important to understand the concepts of gender and mainstreaming, particularly in relation to security.

Gender alludes to the socially constructed roles of men and women. It encompasses not just women: addressing gender ‘issues’ is acknowledging and understanding the bias, experiences, challenges and perspectives as affecting - and effected by - men, women, boys and girls. Gender mainstreaming aims to address the disparities between males and females, and to challenge those normative political, social and cultural structures that create inequality and ignore gender bias.

According to a European Commission definition, gender mainstreaming

"is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men – and taking responsibility to re-address them if necessary."1

Although this definition concentrates on equality as the ultimate goal, at the contextual and operational level, gender mainstreaming must involve greater intricacies and awareness of differences and what a perspective actually is. This is better spelt out under the UN definition:

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality...Issues across all areas of activity should be defined in such a manner that gender

differences can be diagnosed - that is, an assumption of gender-neutrality should not be made. “” (author’s emphasis)

An anecdote of a real situation from a Europe-based agency sent to build a bridge in Sri Lanka best demonstrates ‘how’ to gender ‘mainstream’:

“During one of the …pre-operations briefings, gender equality was on the agenda. However, the operation officer didn’t think that was necessary: “Our task is to build a bridge, we don’t need to worry about gender issues”, he claimed. The instructor then started to ask questions: “Who is going to use this bridge?” Well, the locals,” the officer answered. “You mean men, women and children?” the instructor asked. “Well, yes.” “OK, how do they travel?” “By car mostly,” the officer answered. “The women too?” the instructor asked. “No, they’ll probably walk,” the officer answered. “Then maybe you want to consider building a pedestrian zone on the bridge?” the instructor asked. The operation officer could only agree. “Now, gentlemen, we have just used a gender perspective on building a bridge,” the instructor added.”

And another from Afghanistan:

“In rebuilding houses in Afghanistan the international community decided to place running water inside the houses so that the women did not have to walk to the well to get water everyday, several times a day. This is not what women in Afghanistan want, as going to the well to get water is sometimes their only opportunity to meet other people, other women, to find out what is happening in the village and the surrounding area. By not knowing and respecting the cultural and social norms of the Afghan society we further limited the women’s possibilities to access important information that would only be transmitted to them while visiting the well.”

Mainstreaming is not about just adding a ‘woman’s component’ or even a ‘gender equality component’ or an assumptive ‘improvement for women’ into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation or consulting ‘women’s groups’; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to the operation. Hence, gender mainstreaming is not just about including women in decision making, but is a means to reconceptualise the policy, implementation and evaluation process.

Why does ‘gender’ sometimes seem confined to ‘women’s issues’? Because females make up half of the population, yet are often excluded from processes and they are invariably the hardest hit by situations and consequences of war and conflict that EU missions seek to address. Furthermore, as women are often those most responsible for supporting day-to-day life in many developing states (particularly those most affected by conflict), violence against women is used as a weapon of conflict to disrupt society. To address this problem, therefore, most attention in the gender framework needs to concentrate on redressing this imbalance i.e. back towards women.

Unless there is a particular focused effort, such as through the appointment of a gender adviser (as happened in the EUFOR DRC mission - discussed later), there have been difficulties in

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3 Swedish Rescue Services Agency anecdote as reported in “From words to action”, Genderforce Sweden, partnership brochure. www.genderforce.se

4 Larsson, Lena, Gender Perspective in ESDP Operations, EU Training on gender and ESDPs, Budapest, Hungary, 18-20 April 2007.

operationalising gender mainstreaming within security policies. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that ‘gender’ is often only seen in the light of ‘gender equality’. The European Security Strategy (2003) has no reference to gender perspectives – let alone gender equality - despite being written after UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (October 2000). Indeed, the trend towards general gender mainstreaming appears to have stagnated a few years after 2000. If anything, there has been an increasing resistance to include gender in documents, planning and operationalisation. Excuses offered include: ‘word limits’; ‘insufficient time’; ‘it is mainstreamed already’; ‘too repetitive’; ‘culturally difficult’ or ‘inappropriate’. This is unacceptable and counterproductive to efficient and effective policies and operations.

**Gender in the security framework**

Any framework for analysing gender and security needs to address the challenges not only of increasing women’s access, participation and visibility and giving it equal value, but also confronting the male-dominated security and military ‘domain’. The main aspects of gender mainstreaming for security and conflict areas include: gender equality and promoting mainstreaming; addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation (SEA); gender balance in decision making; human rights; gender training; gender perspectives for internally displaced persons (IDPs), disarmament demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); security sector (or system) reform (SSR); and gender perspective in the rule of law and justice. These areas all interface with gender in development, governance and human rights.

Why must gender be integrated into the security framework? First, because gender mainstreaming and equality is a globally mandated requirement instrumental in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and in implementing the Beijing ‘Platform for Action’ from the 4th World Conference on Women (1995), the Cairo Programme of Action (from the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and UNSCR 1325. Second, because it is important to use the whole pool of humanity, not just half of it: when men and women participate in decision making, better results are achieved. Finally, from the practical side, involving gender perspectives and mainstreaming is ‘operationally strategic’ for efficiency and effectiveness, and ensures success in EU missions.

The most recent EU-Institute for Security Studies (EU-ISS) Chaillot paper on *Gender and Mainstreaming in ESDP*, based on a study of the Bosnia and Herzegovina ESDP missions, states the need for gender mainstreaming - as well as for the inclusion of men in its implementation. It argues that gender mainstreaming has widespread ramifications in establishing more effective missions, and that men are important too, as they are the ones likely to constitute the overwhelming majority of the personnel of security missions for the foreseeable future. Hence, men need to understand gender mainstreaming equally, if not more so, than women.

**Current processes on gender and security in the EU**

Following the historic UNSCR 1325, the EU has proceeded with various steps for implementation of gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector, beginning with the European Parliament resolution on Gender Aspects of Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in

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November 2000. Although the EU is still catching up with mainstreaming gender in its missions, mainly due to its ‘young’ security strategies and nascent mission involvement (compared to the UN establishing the first Gender Office in peacekeeping missions in 1999 – UNMIK Kosovo and UNTAET Timor-Leste), it is now beginning to integrate gender into the security dimension.

There have been a number of recent examples. For instance: the Council has recently drawn up a checklist on gender mainstreaming in ESDP missions; the Council commissioned the EU-ISS to analyse the Bosnia and Herzegovina missions as case studies for implementation of gender mainstreaming in ESDP, which was presented to the Politico-Military Group in July 2006; the November 2006 General and External Relations Council (GAERC) conclusions on promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in crisis management; and a 2006 report on gender in the EUFOR DRC mission, which was the first EU mission to have a gender adviser appointed to its EU Operational Headquarters. The Council GAERC conclusions from May 2007 point to broadening the ‘scope of gender equality’ to include fragile states, peacebuilding and reconstruction, and highlight that gender issues have started to be systematically included in the planning and conduct of all ESDP operations.

Moreover, gender mainstreaming is subsequently being evaluated in the ‘lessons learned’ processes. The Council DG9 Policy Unit undertook training for Heads of ESDP missions in 2006 into which gender perspectives were mainstreamed. The first EU training course on gender and ESDP was organised by Hungary in April 2007, with the support of the German Presidency; and is a mechanism that the EU hopes to operationalise annually.

The Commission has concentrated primarily on gender from a development perspective, but is currently entertaining the creation of a joint Council-Commission document on gender guidelines which could include a security aspect.

In the European Parliament, the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) has approved a working document ‘Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan’ (23 March 2007). The document aims to bring the Parliament towards the “dynamism of the Council in the field of gender mainstreaming into ESDP” by gender mainstreaming in the SEDE itself. It also wants the SEDE to scrutinise gender issues in ESDP and missions, as well as to initiate a report on ‘The gender impact of ESDP operations’ by the end of the parliamentary term in 2009.

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**Member States**

Particularly for ESDP missions, it is crucial that Member States also integrate and implement gender mainstreaming and UNSCR 1325 into national policies, as it is Member States that are responsible for mission training. This should include security and defence policy and training. In 2006, the Council asked member states what steps they had implemented towards 1325. Of the 27 member states, only three had devised, written and implemented 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs). One of the states that is quite active in gender mainstreaming in security is Sweden. The Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Police are two of six partners in Genderforce, which takes UNSCR 1325 as a starting point to improve Swedish post-conflict peacekeeping operations and ensure that the specific needs of both men and women are taken into account in the area of operation.

**Gender in EU civilian military strategy and crisis management**

Despite UNSCR 1325 establishing security legitimacy of gender issues in the broader international context, the operational paragraphs refer specifically to mandates of the UN Security Council and UN Peacekeeping Operations. As such, adaptation to an EU context is based on the document, but developed for the particular context of most ESDP missions being civilian-military focussed. A study by the Swedish National Defence College deduced that the complexity of implementation of 1325 and gender mainstreaming from an awareness and cooperation perspective means that “there is a tendency for gender issues to receive less attention when civil-military cooperation activities are being carried out”.

Delay of mainstreaming implementation seems to stem mainly from normative resistance to the equal value of females, as research evidence actually shows several aspects demonstrating the benefits of gender inclusiveness. For example, female peacekeepers are seen as ‘more approachable’ than males. Several European military commanders have recently voiced the need for gender perspectives as providing ‘the key to success’ in peacekeeping operations, as ‘operationally strategic’ and important in addressing communication weaknesses. Hence, to be effective in civilian crisis management, it is particularly important that gender sensitivity is also integrated at the highest levels of authority and chain of decision-making. To its credit, DG9 (Civilian Crisis Management) of the EU Council organised a Gender Mainstreaming Seminar for Heads of ESDP Missions in November 2006 in light of this acknowledgement.

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16 Denmark, Sweden and the UK have NAPs. Italy, Austria, Finland and the Netherlands are working towards NAPs. That leaves 20 member states with no known progress towards NAPs. European states (but non-EU) Norway and Switzerland also have NAPs.
17 From words to action, Genderforce Sweden, partnership brochure. [www.genderforce.se](http://www.genderforce.se)
19 “Cooperation in the field” in From words to action, Genderforce Sweden.
20 Batt, Judy and Valenius, Johanna, *op. cit.*
21 Brigadier Karl Engelbretson, Force Commander of the Nordic Battlegroup is ‘convinced that UNSCR 1325 is a tool to help implement tasks more efficiently’. Quoted in From words to action, Genderforce Sweden.
23 Major General Sverker Göranson, Chief of Staff Swedish Army. From words to action, Genderforce Sweden.
24 See The UN Special Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, 9 October 2003.
The November 2006 Council GAERC conclusions on crisis management acknowledge that gender awareness and sensitivity contribute to operational effectiveness and stipulate that a gender adviser or focal point should be appointed for all EU missions and operations. As such, the Council stipulates operationally that gender sensitivity must be assured throughout the chain of command, and training should be undertaken at all levels and address stereotypes to redress gender equality. In particular, it stresses a zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence and prostitution, and calls for retribution for any violations (although this is the responsibility of EU member states, hence the need for NAPs on 1325 as iterated previously in this article).

**Gender in ESDP operations**

The 2006 Council checklist for gender mainstreaming in ESDP provides a reasonably clear outline of when and where to mainstream gender. However, the document is weakened by prefacing most of the recommendations with ‘should’ and not providing the ‘how’ of “analysing the specific situation of men and women” or devising a “gender summary” or “contact with local women’s groups”. It also needs to deal with the taboo issue of the masculinised military sector and how this affects women in missions, as well as provide greater understanding of gender perspectives and gender bias in field operations. Such problems are articulated through the Council commissioned study by EU-ISS:

> “While the top-level officers in both missions demonstrated a positive disposition towards women in the missions, one could not avoid the impression that they had very little knowledge of what gender mainstreaming actually is and what purposes it serves.”

The study also laments that operationally, consultation with females and women’s groups is not systematically incorporated within the ESDP framework. Part of the problem is that the EU can only provide guidelines for gender training and awareness, but it is the Member States responsibility to conduct the actual training. Nevertheless, if the checklist is used in conjunction with a gender adviser and proper training (from pre-planning stages of a mission), it does provide a solid framework for addressing gender mainstreaming.

The ESDP mission in Aceh (AMM), widely praised as one of the most successful EU missions, did not completely integrate a gender perspective. Former Head of Mission, Justin Davies, regretted that human rights, including women’s rights, were not fully incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding that grew from the peace negotiations. Indeed, women invited by the GAM to the negotiating table were asked to leave by other parties to the talks before these parties would agree to negotiate. Critiques of the EUPM mission and problems with EUBAM Rafah on gender sensitivity have also led to a drive for greater gender awareness in ESDP.

As such, the EUFOR DRC mission has set a successful precedent by conducting more training and gender awareness than previous missions – including explaining gender perspectives and articulating zero-tolerance of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and prostitution on the EUFOR ‘soldier card’. The former head of the EUFOR mission to the DRC

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26 Batt, Judy and Valenius, Johanna, op. cit. p. 7
has stated the strategic importance and value of including gender aspects in all pre-planning, planning and implementation of EU missions.\textsuperscript{28}

The gender adviser of EUFOR DRC recommends that in order to fully integrate gender into operations, gender mainstreaming should commence with the initial fact finding mission – which, at present, is not automatically included. Lack of resources or understanding of gender is not a legitimate excuse to ignore gender mainstreaming. For example, the EUPOL Afghanistan mission\textsuperscript{29} - launched in mid-June 2007 – was furnished with a pre-deployment gender training package, but will not have a gender adviser until fully deployed at the end of 2007, by which time the personnel will be scattered across Afghanistan. In comparison, a better example is the planned Kosovo mission, which will have a full-time Human Rights & Gender Unit and Adviser in Pristina for its proposed 1,800 personnel, as well as gender pre-training for former UNMIK personnel on the ground, and new EU personnel whose senior staff will receive in-house training.

**Sexual violence and harassment**

The most appalling aspect of gender challenges is gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) including trafficking. In numerous conflict situations and post-conflict settings, ESDP missions have encountered the use of sexual violence and rape as a method of warfare, as well as sexual trafficking and prostitution. It is crucial that these issues are not tolerated, as reinforced by the EU Generic Standards of Behaviour. Particularly so, as the only reference made to women in the European Security Strategy is twice – as victims of sex trafficking.

After revelations came to light that UN peacekeepers had committed sexual and gender-based violence, UN SCR 1674 (2006) paragraph 19, now provides an international legal framework to redress such crimes; to ‘address its impact where it takes place’; and to implement ‘zero-tolerance’ of sexual exploitation and abuse. To reinforce this, the EU Council Conclusions on implementing gender in ESDP missions and operations\textsuperscript{30} also has zero-tolerance of not only sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence, but also of prostitution. However, these advances only address those involved in operations, which can still leave the question of non-EU and subcontracted private security personnel in a legal ‘grey area’.

**Adaptation**

Implementing gender mainstreaming within the security sphere, even in a civilian-military context, has not been easy. It has been necessary to tackle erroneous assumptions that women cannot perform roles as well as men, or that female personnel cannot interact with males in certain contexts. Increasing women’s role in ESDP missions also brings new challenges, such as how to cope with a strict segregation of the sexes (so as to avoid the potential for sexual harassment). In which case it is important to recognise that in such circumstances women are not the ‘source of the problem’ – rather it is men’s attitudes that need to be addressed.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Lieutenant General Karlhienz Viereck, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{31} Valenius, Johanna, interviews of missions in Kosovo 2004.
Nevertheless, there is a growing recognition of the strategic and operational value of gender perspectives and sensitivity. For instance, female military police are generally regarded as less threatening and more acceptable to local people in conflict areas: often proving better able to handle intercultural communication, especially when interacting with women in Muslim societies.\footnote{Valenius, Johanna, \textit{Gender mainstreaming in ESDP Missions, op. cit.}}

Challenges confronting implementation of the mission in the conflict or post-conflict arena include integration of gender mainstreaming in fact-finding, planning and engaging with the local population. The solution is to think ‘inside-the-box’ as to how jobs might need to be done differently. The earlier anecdote is a case in point: where it was not simply a matter of joining two roads; it was also necessary to assess who used the roads, how and why. Another example relates to de-mining. Currently, there are 20–119 million uncleared landmines worldwide. Often females and males will have different perspectives and priorities for mine clearance; different needs for mine awareness training; and different priorities for victim support.\footnote{UN Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, 2005. http://www.mineaction.org/overview.asp?o=32} Similarly, for gender-distinct needs and support within SSR, DDR and rule of law frameworks.

Within the EU context, the proposed European Institute for Gender Equality\footnote{http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_institute/index_en.html} (to be opened in 2008 in Vilnius, with a budget of 52.5m Euros for the period 2007-2013) will conduct research and ensure the “best implementation of Community policy in the field of gender equality”. It should also be tasked with ensuring that research into best practice for gender mainstreaming in missions and institutional EU mission planning is widely disseminated.

\section*{Conclusion}

Beyond ‘mainstreaming’ rhetoric, a continual integration of gender in the security framework and EU missions is required. It is not simply a question of equality, but also of improving the effectiveness of conflict management by bringing to bear the perspectives of both ‘halves’ of the population. Integrating gender sensitivity and abolishing gender blindness and assumption of gender neutrality are tools for the improvement of conflict management and ESDP. This can be achieved by integrating the perspectives of the whole community - both females and males (remembering simple examples such as the bridge and water anecdotes at the beginning of this article). This must be coupled with the understanding that particular programmes and policies dealing with the improvement and empowerment of females and gender equality, must be advanced in parallel with, and not diluted by, implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Gender is a crosscutting issue and still needs to be integrated horizontally across policy instruments and programmes; utilising lessons learned to answer the ‘how?’ and not be just a thematic issue ‘tacked on’ as an afterthought.

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