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To maintain international peace and security.

Women's leadership and participation in the Italian and Swedish armed forces from a human rights' perspective

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Abstract:

Considering the major role played by the armed forces in the maintenance of international peace and security, this research looks at the participation and leadership of women in peace and security processes within military institutions. Military and police forces have been traditionally employed in peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Although the UN Charter makes no reference to peacekeeping as we currently know it, it has become an immensely important component of collective security, which is characterized by using militaries to assist the establishment of the essential elements of sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. At the same time, though, the boundaries between conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement have become progressively blurred, indeed peace operations are rarely limited to one type of activity. In fact, military and police forces are ever more utilised in processes of peacebuilding, which involve the development of PKOs in long-term efforts to reconstruct, reconcile and restore post-conflict communities.

Considering the need for democratic control of the armed forces and for their legitimization in the eyes of society, these institutions are increasingly required to reflect the values of the society they are part of, thus an insufficient representation of women in the institution is a major issue.

The specific focus of this investigation examines the Nordic countries, and specifically Sweden, considering their strong involvement in international peacekeeping and crises management and, simultaneously, in gender equality efforts in many societal sectors. On the other hand, looking at the Mediterranean shores of Europe, the Italian setting is analysed in comparison with the Nordic countries in order to observe potential differences and similarities between these two contexts. Indeed, while there is very scarce research on the Italian armed forces, this analysis suggests quite unexpected patterns in the comparison between Sweden and Italy in the overall multi-level global context. What is particularly puzzling is not only the general still very low representation of women in the armed forces and in peacekeeping, particularly, but also to observe how two countries characterized by quite different contexts have similarly very meagre numbers of women within their militaries.

On the other hand, this study acknowledges that numerical representation is not sufficient but what is really required is meaningful and effective participation, starting from the leadership level, as explicitly demanded by the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, introduced by UNSCR 1325 in 2000. Thus, the main research question of this study is: How the WPS Agenda is perceived to have influenced women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes within the Italian and Swedish armed forces?

In order to answer this comprehensive question and considering also that UNSCR 1325 is an important example of how feminist activism has influenced the global security agenda, this research makes reference to a critical feminist paradigm while utilising a critical discourse analysis so as to understand the different narratives behind the policies adopted at the different international levels and within the national settings. Indeed, the data, which are employed to examine this puzzle and have been collected by means of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with different stakeholders, policies and statistics available online, in public archives or released directly to the researcher, also by means of field research, are compared and examined side by side with the aim of understanding how the various discourses on the WPS Agenda connect and relate in developing specific framings of the agenda itself and its intended transformative potential.

“All oppression creates a state of war. And this is no exception.”

— *Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex*

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1. Introduction: overview of the main concepts and thesis structure

“Sit on the ground and talk to people. That’s the most important thing” Dag Hammarskjöld¹

This introduction starts by outlining in the first paragraph the main concepts this research is built on. It then reveals, in the second section, the puzzle which drove the study itself towards its aim and research questions described in the third section. Finally, in the fourth and last section, it depicts the overall structure of this thesis.

1. Understanding peace and security in human terms

First of all, it is necessary to comprehend what peace and security processes are by looking at the two main pillars constituted by the concepts themselves of peace and security.

Peace is the necessary prerequisite to enjoy every human right, starting from the very right to life. Indeed, the Charter of the United Nations, the constitution of the international community (Klabbers 2017, 94), opens by proclaiming: “we the peoples of the united nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (UN Charter 1945). Moreover, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the founding document of the overall human rights regime (Heupel 2018), stressed the essential connection between peace and human rights declaring that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace”.

Indeed, the UN issued two different declarations regarding peace: in 1984, the UN Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace affirmed: “that life without war serves as the primary international prerequisite for the material well-being, development and progress of countries, and for the full implementation of the rights and fundamental human freedoms proclaimed by the United Nations” (UN General Assembly 1984).

In 2016, the first article of the UN Declaration on the Right to Peace stated that: “Everyone has the right to enjoy peace such that all human rights are promoted and protected and development is fully realized” (UN General Assembly 2016).

In order to reach peace, though, it is required a real paradigm shift in approaching this concept.

¹ As reported in “The Adventure of Peace: Dag Hammarskjöld and the Future of the United Nations” (Ask, S., Mark-Jungkvist, A. 2006, 99).

A traditional perception of peace has always implied that peace is only a temporary status, nothing more than a limbo between the previous war and the next unavoidable war. Thus, peace was characterized by this state of uncertainty. The other major trait of this view of peace is the absolute absence of a definition of peace as an autonomous concept, peace has no intrinsic value, but it can be understood only in its relation to its opposite counterpart, war. Peace is nothing but the mere absence of war. Indeed, the famous Latin quote: “Si vis pacem, para bellum” (probably derived from the later Roman Empire writer Vegetius who stated “Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum”; Perini, 2014) is exactly the essence of this mentality, where peace can be understood only through war and also is seen only in the viewpoint of the next war.

Gradually, though, this perspective has been integrated by a different understanding of the concept of peace, an understanding which tries to examine the many components of this multi-layered (and no longer just the flat opposite of war) reality and its various connections in many fields of knowledge (e.g., the vital importance of education for peace). It is possible to talk of an evolution from a negative conceptualization of peace to a much more positive approach to this notion, which, furthermore, stresses the duties and obligations embodied in it. This elaboration can be observed also in the text of the two aforementioned UN Declarations regarding peace, it is evident an important shift in the perception of the meaning of the right to peace from a “traditional approach” to a “human rights approach”, in the words of Guillermet Fernandez and Fernandez Puyana (2017).

On the other hand, security, in its basic understanding as the state of being free from danger or threat, is intrinsically associated with peace. Thus, without peace not even security can be achieved.

1.2 A human right to peace

Considering though that peace cannot only be understood as a standalone utopia, but it needs to be framed as a realistic goal to be actualized, it is necessary to look at the consequential concept of a right to peace: a concept which generates a wide debate. Indeed, even during the discussions preceding the adoption of the 2016 UN Declaration on the Right to peace, complete opposite views on the understanding of the concept of ‘peace’ emerged. Cuba stated that: "Peace is not a utopia but a human right of every individual and of all peoples" and that it is "one of the fundamental conditions for the respect of all human rights and in particular for the respect of the supreme right to life." On the other hand, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom disclosed their opposition to the adoption of the resolution, alleging the lack of a legal basis in international law, considering particularly that

so far, no certain definition of the concept of ‘peace’ has been accepted at the international level (APG23, 2016).

Similarly, some scholars do not consider peace as a human right and believe that peace and human rights should remain two distinct concepts, for instance they assert that peace is not currently recognized in international human rights law (Julio and Drumond 2017) or, as Donnelly (2006, 150) states, “labelling peace as a human right is not going to bring us any closer to realizing a world without war. Conversely, redirecting our human rights resources to the struggle for peace, even if that might have a more peaceful world, would still leave unaddressed most of the very serious human rights problems”.

On the other hand, other scholars have understood the right to peace as a third-generation human right². Likewise, stating that “the work for peace is essentially working for the most elementary human right: the right to security and freedom from fear”, Dag Hammarskjöld, second UN Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Prize winner, affirmed that the UN had a “responsibility to assist governments in protecting this essential human right without them having to hide behind a shield of weapons” (Guillermet Fernandez and Fernández Puyana 2017, 287). Indeed, the reformulation of the right to peace in a human rights frame shifts overall the focus from the state to the individual.

While regardless of the chosen standpoint the necessary connection between peace and human rights is clearly evident, this study explicitly endorses the framing of the right to peace within the human rights system which permits to acknowledge individuals as rights-holders; as a matter of fact, the international human rights framework allows individuals to be directly empowered and made aware of their rights and obligations, while engaged in their quest for peace³.

1.3 A human security

International security studies are focused on studying organized violence and the actions taken by individuals, alone or jointly, to employ this structured form of violence effectively and to protect themselves from it. Thus, traditional security scholars view the state as the only referent object of security and the field of security studies as about the phenomenon of war which can only be defined as “the study of the threat, use, and control of military force” (Walt 1991, 212-213).

² Thus, considering the idea of different generations of rights, a conceptualization coined by Vasak in the 1970s in order to classify human rights in specific categories, as a right belonging to the most controversial and least institutionalized group (Langlois 2016, 16).

³ Moreover, states are directly and legally accountable for rights violations committed both by state and non-state actors (Mudgway 2017, 1459-1460).

Contrary to this view, characterized by a focus on militaristic understanding of enemies, threats and risks, different approaches started questioning this unidimensional comprehension of security: the Copenhagen School, for instance, developed the so called securitization theory according to which an issue is considered a security threat not because of its objective features as a threat to the state but because it has been defined as an existential threat by an actor, requiring thus the employment of extraordinary means for survival (Diskaya 2013). Subsequently, the broader field of so-called Critical Security Studies⁴ started asking “whose security” was at stake. Thus, the scope of international security, from primarily focusing on security of the nation state, started embracing the concept of human security. On the other hand, considering that “security narratives limit how we can think security, whose security matters, and how it might be achieved” (Wibben 2010, 65), it is necessary to be concerned by “how subjects and meanings are constructed through security narratives and how these processes are gendered” (Wibben 2010, 66). In fact, “[u]nderstanding that multiple “realities” are created through coexisting narratives is crucial to the feminist project, which can use narrative approaches to uncover how a certain normality/reality is presumed, to challenge these supposedly shared understandings, and to develop alternative scenarios” (Wibben 2010, 110). Thus, Wibben (2010, 7-8) points out how it is pivotal “an opening of security studies that would allow for feminist (and other) narratives to be recognized and taken seriously as security narratives”.

In 2001, when the Commission on Human Security was created, Japanese national Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was named co-chair along with Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. In 2003 they presented to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan a report called ‘Human Security Now’, which, emphasising the role of economic, cultural and social rights stated that: “Human Security complements state security, strengthens human development and enhances human rights” (Basch 2004). Thus, even recognizing that in Security Council discourse, human security means in simple terms “making certain aspects of human rights and humanitarian concerns relevant to the peace and security agenda” (Cohn et al. 2004, 135), this concept has great potential as “an alternative and integrated framework for thinking about security—one that views peace, security, equality, human rights, and development as interrelated” (Bunch 2004, 30).

Indeed, the core of human security is the security of people against threats to personal safety and life, which can be jeopardized not only by external aggression, but also by factors within a country. Thus “[o]ne ‘leg’ of human security is in the human rights tradition [...]. The other is in the development agenda” (Thakur 2009, 72).

⁴ These studies question the centrality of the state as a political actor while having an emancipatory element: for example they emphasize the caring humanitarian side of military duties, as in peacekeeping operations, and the increasing visibility of women and homosexuals in the military (Tickner 2004, 47).

1.4 To maintain international peace and security: integrating humanitarian and human rights law

Peace and security are, simultaneously, also the two main pillars of the broader concept of collective security, under the primary responsibility of the Security Council, in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security, according to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, a task translated so far mostly in military terms (Heathcote and Otto 2014). Still, in the aftermath of the Cold War, during which, a part from the use of peacekeeping as a way to act on the global scene, the Security Council was deadlocked (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 5), it started mentioning human rights and humanitarian concerns⁵ as threats to international peace and security (Mills and Karp 2015, 234). Thus, rather than being considered in opposition, human rights were considered constitutive of state sovereignty and their violation was seen as a possible ground for the loss of legitimacy and immunity of a state from external intervention. This idea of ‘a right (and a duty) to protect’ from gross violations of human rights was expressed in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in a report entitled ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ (Mills and Karp 2015, 235).

Indeed, particularly relevant in this new comprehension of collective security is the parallel evolution in the understanding of the legal frameworks applicable to armed conflicts, from an exclusive application of humanitarian law to an integration of it with human rights law. As Schabas asserts: “After a period of some legal uncertainty as to whether or not human rights law applies during armed conflict, some having argued that it is displaced by the *lex specialis* of the law of armed conflict, it is now beyond serious dispute that human rights protections and obligations continue during wartime” (2017, 30)⁶.

2. Where are the women? An inclusive and equitable commitment to peace and security

In order to reach peace⁷, though, it is necessary an inclusive and equitable commitment, aware of the capacities of half the world’s population to resolve the complex challenges of global peace and security (Coomaraswamy 2015).

⁵ Human rights and humanitarianism are characterized by different perspectives on agency. Moreover, while human rights is a political project aimed at ensuring that all people have what they need to live in dignity, humanitarianism is about granting people the possibility to survive on a day-to-day basis (Mills and Karp 2015, 224).

⁶ As a matter of fact, international humanitarian law and human rights law have rightly been said to share a “common nucleus of non-derogable rights and a common purpose of protecting human life and dignity” (IACHR 1997, para. 158) and their interrelation is regulated through the *lex specialis* principle, according to which the law specifically designed for the situation, *lex specialis*, comes before a competing, more general law, *lex generalis* (Melzer 2016, 29).

⁷ And especially a holistic conceptualisation of peace incorporating aspects of economic and social justice, equality, and human rights (Swaine et al. 2019, 4)

2.1 Women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes: the introduction of the WPS Agenda

Indeed, in 2000, the General Assembly reaffirmed the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, demanding the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In the same year, the Security Council issued a presidential statement which recognised the connection between peace and women's rights and the Secretary-General solicited a Report of the Panel on the UN Peace Operations which identified the need for equal gender representation in peacekeeping missions, especially in positions of authority. The report led to the adoption of 'The Windhoek Declaration' on the 31st of May 2000, demanding gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations (PKOs), equal access and representation of women in peace processes and leadership positions (WILPF).

Few months later, the Security Council adopted the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which gives birth to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, based on the four pillars of prevention, participation, protection and peacebuilding and recovery. Subsequently nine other resolutions have been approved by the UN Security Council: 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

The UNSCR 1325 is the first normative document to explicitly recognize the importance of a gender perspective in peace operations and military affairs and it states clearly that the Security Council: "[...] urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel" (UN Security Council 2000, para.4). Moreover, it deals specifically with PKOs, as a matter of fact it: "Expresses its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component" (UN Security Council 2000, para.5)), while highlighting the necessity "for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes" (UN Security Council 2000, para.2).

Accordingly, UN Women declared to prioritize "the area of increasing women's leadership and participation in Peace and Security and Humanitarian Response and support the implementation of intergovernmental commitments on peace and security, including those from the Beijing Platform for Action, SCRs 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122 and relevant regional commitments" (UN Women 2014, 1).

Many scholars have argued that the systematic and representative inclusion of women in peace and security processes significantly increase the chances of attaining sustainable peace outcomes (Byrne 1996, Gizelis 2009, Myrntinen 2016), that an increase in their presence is connected with an increase in operational effectiveness -mainly in information gathering, operational credibility and enhanced force protection (D'Almeida et al. 2017, Dharmapuri 2011, Egnell et al. 2014, Penttinen 2012)- and that women's inclusion in peace and transition processes also translates to more responsive conflict prevention (O'Reilly et al. 2015, Paffenholz et al. 2016, Pruitt 2013). Moreover, numerous UN reports show that the participation of women in peace and security processes is directly connected to their operational effectiveness (Coomaraswamy 2015, UN Women 2012a, 2014) and that the participation of women in peacekeeping is a critical component of the mission success (UN Women 2016, 2). Still, it is important to notice that the argument here is not about women being inherently more peaceful than men but about their potentiality to bring a different perspective and skill set: for example, in gaining access to specific parts of the host population (D'Almeida et al. 2017, 315).

2.2 The puzzle: the scarce representation of women in peace and security processes despite the introduction of the WPS Agenda

The UNSCR 1325 was “welcomed by feminist scholars and activists alike, who described it as a ‘landmark resolution’ representing a ‘new, daring, and ambitious strategy for anti-war feminists’, a ‘watershed political framework’, and a ‘significant success story’ for gender mainstreaming” (Otto 2015, 4). Indeed, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded in 1919 as result of the International Congress of Women held at The Hague in 1915, had a major role in 2000 in influencing the Security Council (remaining thereafter actively involved in the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security which promotes the implementation of all the WPS resolutions).

Yet, notwithstanding the long-awaited engagement of the United Nations, the integration of women in peace and security processes is still very modest (Bell 2015, Karim and Beardsley 2017, Kronsell 2012).

Indeed, the UN has recognized that “Peacekeeping operations are well positioned to advance women, peace and security through their comparative advantage, extensive field presence and strategic access to senior leadership of national governments to advocate for gender integration in national policies and reform” (UN 2018, 3). It has, moreover, declared that: “UN Peacekeeping operations are mandated by the Security Council to implement the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace

and Security across all peace functions” (UN 2019a) and affirmed that they aimed at doubling the number of women in the roles of military and police peacekeepers by 2020, a goal recently set at 15%, and 25% for military observers and staff officers and respectively 20% and 30% for women serving in formed police units for individual police officers and to be reached by 2028 (UN Women 2019b). Yet, in 2016 UN military peacekeepers were composed of 97 per cent male members (UN Women 2016). Accordingly, in 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres, in his 2017 Gender Parity Strategy, affirmed that: “Peacekeeping is the most visible face of the United Nations...The fact that only 3% of UN peacekeepers and 10% of police are women hampers our protection reach and operational effectiveness and sends the wrong message about who the UN serves and represents” (Guterres 2017, 15).

It is important to consider that the limited amount of female personnel participating in UN missions is directly linked to the actual number of women in the armed and police forces of the Troop and Police Contributing Countries. Thus, a scarce representation in the sending institutions means an even scarcer representation in international missions and UN peace operations specifically. Indeed, not only the context of the military is characterized by a strong masculine culture (even hyper-masculine; see Kirby, 2017, 277) which creates an environment not properly women-friendly, but within this context, international operations and peacekeeping ones in the specific, are distinguished by features (mainly related to security exigences and roles of stereotypes and prejudices) which bring even more challenges to an increase in women’s leadership (Karim and Breadsley, 2017).

Considering that 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UNSCR1325 and the beginning of the WPS Agenda, this still pervasive insufficient representation of women is the major dilemma this research faces and tries to address by looking at the context of two specific countries, Italy and Sweden⁸, two case studies better outlined below.

2.3 A threat to women’s human rights: a threat to global human rights

It is imperative to reflect on the fact that a scarce representation of women in peace and security processes not only directly jeopardizes women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by conflicts, also in the consideration that these situations intensify pre-existing gender inequalities and

⁸ For what regards these countries, the data shows that while the percentage of women in the armed forces was 11.1% in the NATO in 2017, the last year for which NATO national reports on Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces have been published, and 5.18% in Italy in 2017, the last year for which data about the Italian Armed Forces have been released (SMD 2019; information given personally to the researcher). This last percentage ranks Italy just above Montenegro and Turkey. Considering Sweden, in 2017 the percentage of female active-duty personnel was 8% in the Swedish Armed Forces (NATO 2017). These percentages refer to the data available at the beginning of the research and have been updated during the research itself.

discrimination (UN 2019a), but this insufficient representation, participation and leadership of women, as active agents of peace in armed conflict, brings about a serious threat to global human rights seen that recognizing and incorporating “the different understanding, experiences and capabilities of women into all aspects of UN peace operations is essential for the success of UN peacekeeping efforts and sustaining peace” (UN 2019a).

Moreover, considering that the implementation of WPS principles at national and international levels is increasingly focused on state responsibility and action (Kirby and Shepherd 2016, 383), the Security Council’s WPS Agenda has been criticised for supporting the idea that securing international peace relies on military strength and securitized states (Otto 2015, 10). It is necessary to acknowledge that any debate about peacebuilding, collective security, gender and UNSCR 1325, necessarily comprehends the military and paramilitary as essential components (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 266). Nevertheless “for advocates of sustainable peace and security interlinked with development and human rights, the value of the women, peace and security agenda is its potential for transformation, rather than greater representation of women in existing paradigms of militarized response” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 135).

Another clear example of the failure in understanding the holistic scope of the WPS Agenda has been showed by the fact that in the original report on the responsibility to protect (R2P), even if published one year and two months after the UNSCR 1325 was adopted, there was no explicit references to the wider WPS Agenda (Hultman and Johansson 2017, 134).

Thus, it is required a new comprehension of peace, which not only is able to see peace as a permanent and self-reliant concept (for what regards its autonomy from the antonymous concept of war, and not from other necessarily connected concepts such as education, development, justice), but which emphasizing exactly the multiform nature of peace is capable of being built on the contributions of the whole human population, that is men and women. A world free from war cannot be achieved without the efforts of the global human population.

3. Aim and research questions

Considering the major role played by the armed forces in the maintenance of international peace and security, this research looks at the participation and leadership of women in peace and security processes within the institutions involved. Military and police forces have been traditionally employed in peace-keeping operations (PKOs), usually short-term measures directed at safeguarding

physical security of local societies while efforts are made towards reconstruction and the resolution of underlying causes of the conflict (Adjei 2019). Indeed, Dag Hammarskjöld, second Secretary-General of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Prize winner, is reported to have said of the concept of soldiers keeping peace not making war: “peacekeeping is not a job for a soldier, but only a soldier can do it” (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2011, 77).

Moreover, despite the UN Charter makes no reference to peacekeeping as we know it today, it has become an immensely important component of collective security, which is characterized by using militaries to assist the establishment of the essential elements of sustainable peace in post-conflict societies (Heathcote and Otto 2014). At the same time, though, the boundaries between conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement have become increasingly blurred, indeed peace operations are rarely limited to one type of activity (United Nations 2008). In fact, military and police forces are increasingly utilised in processes of peacebuilding, which involve the development of PKOs in long-term efforts to reconstruct, reconcile and restore post-conflict communities while addressing the physical and structural sources of conflict (Galtung 1976).

Considering that “the armed forces are the institution that utilizes organized violence to achieve the objectives of the state. To do so legitimately, this functional imperative is tempered by a societal imperative to reflect the values of society” (Schaub et al. 2012, 1), an insufficient representation of women in the institution is a major issue. For instance, at the EU level, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia still do not have a national action plan (NAP) on the WPS Agenda (EPLO 2019)⁹.

The specific focus of this investigation examines the Nordic countries, and specifically Sweden, considering their strong involvement in international peacekeeping and crises management and, simultaneously, in gender equality efforts in many societal sectors (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012, 8). On the other hand, the Italian setting is analysed in comparison with Sweden in order to observe potential differences and similarities between these two contexts.

While these case studies are further examined in the last part of this section, it is at this point crucial to display the research question confronted by this investigation:

RQ: How the WPS Agenda is perceived to have influenced women’s leadership and participation in peace and security processes within the Italian and Swedish armed forces?

⁹ At the conclusion of this research the situation is as follows: Greece and Hungary are the only two countries within the EU to not have a NAP on the WPS Agenda; see: <https://www.wpsnaps.org/> (accessed 20/11/2022).

A research question which is going to be answered looking simultaneously at some subsequent research questions:

- *SRQ1): To what extent is the WPS Agenda implemented in the Italian and Swedish armed forces?*
- *SRQ2) Can these institutions be considered as cosmopolitan organizations in the view of the post-national defence and the focus on human security?*
- *SRQ3) To what extent are these institutions committed to the human right to peace and specifically engaged in protecting women's human rights?*

3.1 Reckless assertions: looking for evidence

Indeed, while the literature examining women's participation in peace processes has a long history (Adjei 2019) and with the passage of UNSCR 1325 and the other WPS resolutions a new wave of attention has been given to women's participation in peace process (George and Shepherd 2016), a major issue is the fact that this field is characterized by bold statements which lack clear basis for support, especially in terms of evidence.

Just looking at the official UN website on peacekeeping, and particularly at the page on 'promoting women, peace and security', it is possible to observe many different declarations such as: "It's a simple equation - women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacekeeping make our missions more effective and efficient" (DPO Gender Unit 2019) , "Gender equality contributes to lasting peace" (United Nations Peacekeeping 2019) or "Unleashing the power of women leaders and organizations to inform, influence, and transform peace processes is key to sustaining peace and security" (Department of Peace Operations, 2019).

What is problematic, though, about these statements is the still inadequate assistance of actual data in order to upholding them, particularly because of the relatively short time span since the adoption of the WPS Agenda and the work-in-progress status of the development of appropriate indicators. As a matter of fact, in 2010 the Secretary General developed a list of 26 indicators, presented to the Security Council, and included in the Secretary General's Report S/2010/173: particularly at the pages 15-24 (PeaceWomen 2019). These indicators are both quantitative and qualitative and are organized into four pillars: Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery, while they permit to finally start monitoring the WPS Agenda, the process is still challenging.

Moreover, considering that “human rights scholars often know which conclusions they want to arrive at before they begin their research, the temptation to engage in wishful thinking may be great” (Coomans, Grünfeld and Kamminga, 2010, 183). This may derive from the fact that human rights scholars often are (former) human rights activists (Coomans, Grünfeld and Kamminga, 2010), but while the human rights paradigm is a field characterized by a strong normative commitment, this cannot hinder the necessity to be scientific researchers before advocates.

3.2 The theoretical standpoints

“Where are the women? (Enloe 1989), is the fundamental question of the feminist movement.

Even if “gender” does not equal women (Kinsella 2017) and it is possible to do gender and political analysis without subscribing to the feminist project of societal change (Kantola and Lombardo 2017), feminism presents a specific gender sensitivity, not necessarily present in other constructivist or critical theoretical approaches (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012, 1-2).

Even considering that feminism has been defined as “a cluster of contesting views on the gender problematic” (Verloo 2018, 22), gender can be defined as “the social meaning given to the biological differences of sex”, as “performative - a doing and constituting of the identity” (Cossman 2002, 281-282). As Pizarro Beleza reminds us, “people do not ‘belong’ to a gender. They live in a gender relations system which associates imbalances of power with natural sex differences” and which has been throughout History been shaped by the Law as well as by religion, custom, science in the building of a hierarchy, an imbalanced difference, between men and women (2013, 130). Thence, not only gender must be considered in its intersection with other categories of social identity (such as sexuality, ethnicity, age, dis/ability, social class etc.; Lazar 2007, 141), but also “the ways women and men ‘perform’ in the peace and security sphere is socially constructed, rather than biologically inherent” (Powell 2016, 275-276).

Moreover, “the pursuit of social justice and the furtherance of human rights are commensurate with feminist theory” (Mertens and Stewart 2014, 358). In fact, some scholars claimed that “feminists appear to distrust legal reforms because of the tendency of such reforms to tame radical impulses”, while reproducing “prevailing conservative or neoliberal ideologies, rather than challenge them” (Chamallas 2013, 409); on the contrary contemporary feminist scholarship has deeply engaged itself with legal theory influencing the women’s human rights movement.

While criticizing the liberalism underlying the conception of formal ‘equality’ in the main international human rights instruments because of their androcentric construction of human rights

and the perpetuation of the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, Zwingel highlights the importance of the human rights framework for what regards women's rights, because of their value in guiding state behaviour in reaching societal change (Zwingel 2016, 9). Indeed, at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, women's organizations made reference to the new human rights language and called for "women's rights as human rights" (Merry 2006), which underlines the notion that women's rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights, as stated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Moreover, in the General Recommendation 19, the CEDAW Committee¹⁰ framed violence against women as a violation of human rights. Thus, discrimination against women and gender violence were recognized as human rights issues.

Therefore, considering also that UNSCR 1325 is an important example of how feminist activism has influenced the global security agenda, Kronsell (2012, 146) asserts that feminists need to get involved with questions of peace and security, because women "can no longer represent peaceful and beautiful souls but must take responsibility for global relations in the field of war economy, militarism, and defense". The UN itself declared that in conflict situations women are still portrayed as "vulnerable victims", without any examination of the critical role they play in peace and security (DPO Gender Unit 2019), therefore, not only a gender perspective, but rather a critical gender perspective needs to be integrated in all matters of peace and security.

3.3 The choice of the specific case studies¹¹

While this analysis is defined by a framework built on a clear multi-level governance¹² approach, in view of the various intergovernmental organizations involved, this paragraph briefly illustrates the two countries which are the subject matters of the research, and which are further examined throughout the analysis.

Italy:

¹⁰ The Committee is a body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979.

¹¹ **N.B.: By the conclusion of this research some important changes have occurred in relation to the case studies. Whilst naturally data need to be updated, a major event like the COVID 19 pandemic has abruptly modified the life of everyone, it has also strongly impacted each country. In this sense, the updated data are reported at the end of this research, in its conclusions, it is also necessary to consider that at the very ending of this work some drastic changes have occurred in the governments of both countries.**

¹² "Multi-level governance describes the diffusion of power across many levels and types of government, and shared responsibility for policy outcomes between governmental, quasi-governmental and nongovernmental actors" (Cairney, Heikkila and Wood 2019, 7).

While in Italy the feminist movement struggled for women's rights since a very early stage and forms of women's empowerment started during the Renaissance, policies to address the imbalance between the genders have been hesitant and progress in the legal area has been promoted mainly thanks to directives from the EU or the pressures of the civil society. Italy still lacks an adequate structure at the central level to promote, coordinate and monitor initiatives in favour of gender equality (Rosselli 2014).

Still, according to the European Gender Equality Index 2019, based on data from 2017, Italy achieved a score of 63 out of 100, which is less than the EU-28 average of 67.4, but it shows that Italy has progressed the most out of all EU Member States since 2005 improving its Index rank by 12 positions, reaching the 14th place (EIGE 2019).

Italy adopted the first national action plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 in 2010 and then revised it in 2014 and 2016 and it is now committed to adopt a fourth NAP by the end of 2020 (WILPF 2019), moreover the percentage of women in parliament is 35.6%, the gender inequality index is 0.085 and the WPS index 0.79 (Our Secure Future 2019)¹³.

Considering that women were allowed to enter into the armed forces only in the year 2000, making it the last NATO country to give women this possibility, the percentage of female presence in the Italian armed forces (IAF) is quite on the average and not very different from the Scandinavian levels (Sarti 2017).

Sweden:

Sweden is characterized by a government which officially defines itself as a feminist government¹⁴, “committed to building a society in which girls and boys, women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives, and live their lives to their full potential. Gender equality is a human right and is ultimately a question of democracy, representation and social justice” (Government Offices of Sweden 2019, 1). Moreover, the Swedish feminist policies have been highlighted by the previous Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström¹⁵, when in October 2014 stated that Sweden was going to pursue a feminist foreign policy, commitment highlighted also in the 2019

¹³ The Gender Inequality Index measures gender inequalities through human development indicators: 0 is the best possible score and 1 is the worst possible score (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>). The Women, Peace and Security Index is based upon indicators of security, inclusion and justice: 1 is the best possible score and 0 is the worst possible score (<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>). Finally, the Global Peace Index measures the level of peacefulness of a State: 1 is the best possible score and 5 is the worst possible score (<http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/06/GPI-2019-web003.pdf>).

¹⁴ See note number 11.

¹⁵ Replaced in September 2019 by Ann Linde, similarly committed to the government's feminist foreign policy, affirming that: “Our feminist foreign policy has one aim: to make life better for women — and for everyone” (Linde 2019).

Statement of Foreign Policy: “The Government will continue to pursue a feminist foreign policy – wholeheartedly, throughout the world. We see that a growing number of countries are being inspired and are following our lead. Sweden is a leader when it comes to giving greater attention to women, peace and security in the UN, the EU and the OSCE” (Wallström 2019, 3).

The first National Action Plan (NAP) to implement UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2006 and then revised in 2009 and 2016. The percentage of women in parliament is 43.6 % and the gender inequality index is 0.048; the WPS index is 0.854 (Our Secure Future 2019). The Gender Equality Index is 83.6 (EIGE 2019).

Particularly important is that on the 1st of September 2016 the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) have adopted the Handbook on gender, which makes explicit reference to the UNSCR 1325. At the same time, looking expressly at the SAF, Eduards (2012) shows how the various strategies adopted so far, like equality plans to combat gender discrimination and plans to implement UNSCR 1325, have become a form of marketization of the Swedish military at home and abroad as gender aware and gender equal, so it can be considered part of a specific way of representing Sweden to the rest of the world. Of especial relevance has been also the establishment of the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, created in 2012 and hosted in Stockholm, which is an international Military Organisation established in 2012 under the umbrella of the Nordic Defence Cooperation - NORDEFECO.

4. Structure of this thesis

Taking into account what observed so far, this Thesis is structured into this comprehensive introduction, followed by an accurate literature review of the scholarly research in the field in order to arrive step by step to the explanation of the theoretical framework of the study, which has already been introduced in this first section.

Then, a necessary chapter on the methodology is inserted, as to make clear the overall foundations of this study and its limitations, to finally proceed with a rigorous investigation of the context, specifically looking at the military institution and its main and peculiar features, in a continuous dialogue within and outside the feminist debate, and the broad category of peace and security processes. Indeed, in order to understand the case studies of Italy and Sweden an understanding of the broad context where the discourses surrounding the role of women in peace and security have been developed is strictly necessary. Consequently, after this prerequisite, the actual analysis is carried out observing first the multi-level governance context, namely the different multilateral

organizations involved in peacekeeping, thence, as the core of this research, the specific Italian and Swedish contexts. In fact, all of these are the different levels of reality where the WPS Agenda concretely lives.

Lastly the findings of this comparative analysis between Italy and Sweden, within a multi-level system of governance, are outlined in order to eventually draw some conclusions and try to answer the main research question. At the very end, still, the whole project tries to glimpse where the armed forces are heading. Indeed, given that cosmopolitan militaries are distinguished less by traditional military practices of war fighting and more by methods and tactics better suited to the protection of human security, Kronsell (2012, 108-109) explicitly asks if “to encourage societal and institutional change and promote the transition to a humane system of governance is also a task of a cosmopolitan military”.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework: women's leadership and participation in an international peace and security perspective

“Interdisciplinary’, ‘intersectional’ and ‘interlocking’ are the kinds of adjectives that best describe feminist thinking” (Tong and Botts 2018, 1)

This chapter illustrates the major research which has been conducted so far in relation to women's leadership and participation in international peace and security. In fact, the literature review can be understood “as a network of expert information” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 391), thus it is “a conversation taking place among scholars” (Roselle and Spray 2016, 26), which does not occur at a precise moment in the process of the research. Considering that a qualitative research project is characterized by a cyclical and iterative nature, oriented toward discovery, it can be necessary to repeat this phase at different times during the research according to the data being identified and the development of the whole process. Consequently, the literature constructs the context itself within which to interpret the findings.

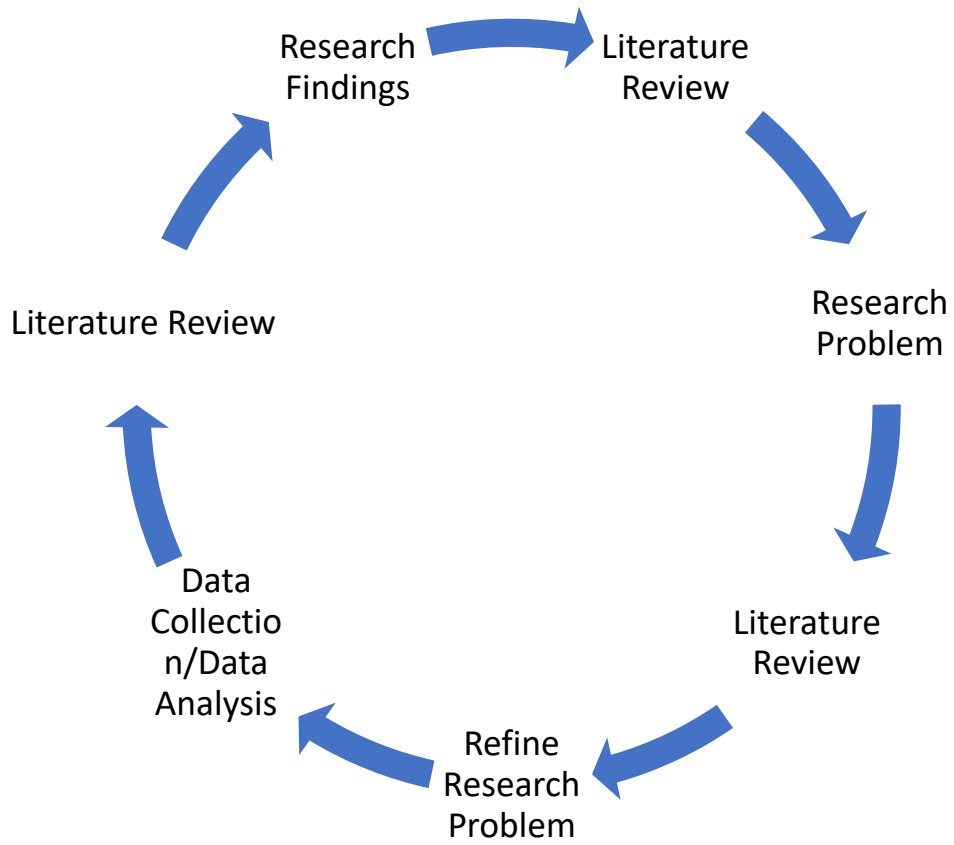


Figure 1: Cyclical and Iterative Nature of the Literature Review in Qualitative Driven Research Projects (Hesse-Biber 2014, 392)

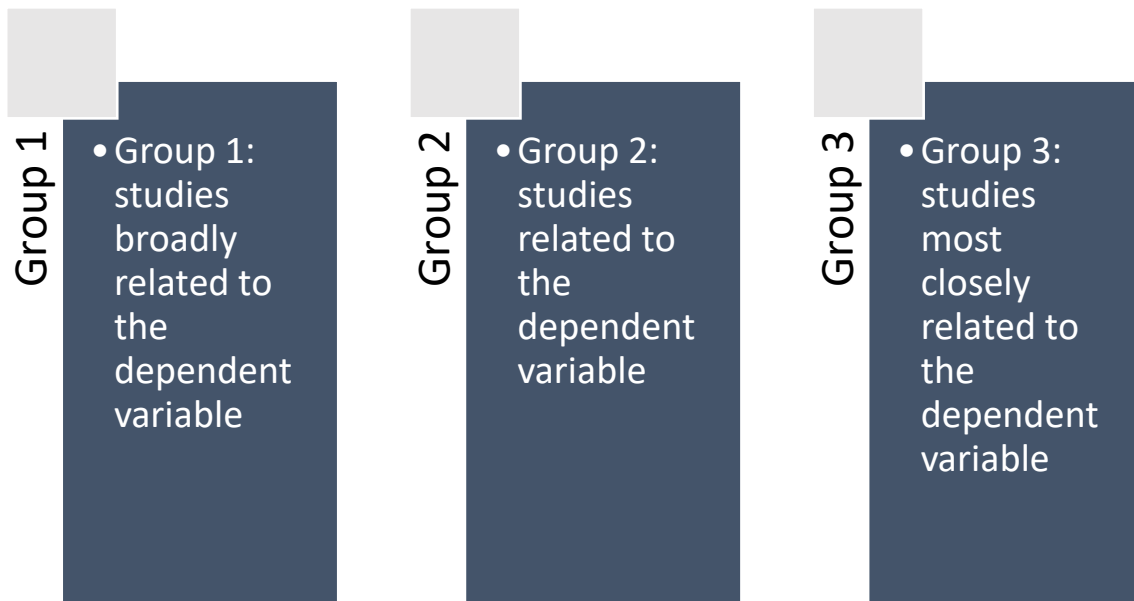


Figure 2: Organizing the Literature Review (Roselle and Spray 2016, 53)

As Wibben (2016, 4) reminds us, quoting in turn Sylverster and Enloe, “[b]y looking for women in the international- by developing a feminist curiosity about war and actually engaging with people- we can learn much about global politics”. Considering, further, all the “contradictory tendencies among the feminist epistemological discourses” (Harding 1986, 28 as quoted in Wibben 2016, 7), “it might be best to consider all of these contradictions as part of a broader conversation that propels the feminist project forward” (Wibben 2016, 7). Still, “[a] good feminist methodological discussion in the context of global politics thus must always also include considerations about whose aims and interests the research is serving”, being aware of the risk of “epistemic violence” (Wibben 2016, 10).

2.1 Women’s leadership and participation:

As Barnett (1998, 3-4) outlines the debate on the status of women has begun at least since the time of the Ancient Greeks, even if it is only during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century that subsequent feminist campaigns to obtain women’s full participation in public life put the issue gradually more and more at the core of public attention. Particularly, a landmark moment, in this process, was the publication in 1949 by Simone de Beauvoir of “The Second Sex”, where she described women as the quintessential “Other” (sex), indeed it is men who have the monopoly on the attribution of meaning and the only reference point as “the standard against which all is judged”, women, on the other hand, have been only the representation of what a man is not (Barnett 1998, 3-4). Indeed, this androcentric construction of the world is reflected in all its components, shaping the core concepts of politics, power, citizenship and the state in a way which mirrors the experiences,

interests and values of male subjects (Kantola and Lombardo 2017, 9). Correspondingly nations are built on essentialized gendered roles positioning women as mothers and biological reproducers of the nation and men as soldiers, leaders and protectors of the nation (Kantola 2016, 925).

Thus, considering the core notions of women's leadership and participation, it is necessary to acknowledge that even if there is a lot of research about the topic of leadership (Klenke 2011), the majority of it is characterized by an empirical or observational approach to the subject which does not specifically deal with women as leaders; moreover, in this deficient theoretical landscape there is almost no feminist pathway (Vetter 2010). According to Vetter (2010) this can be due to the very nature of feminism which, considering the dominance of men in public life, seems to be uncomfortable when addressing power and leadership (Vetter 2010). Still, seen that so far most of the work on gender and leadership has portrayed the archetypal leader as male with masculine traits (Sjoberg 2009, 153; Tickner 1992), it is dramatically required a reflection on the relationship between gender and leadership, and particularly a feminist inquiry into it. Indeed, women and other outsiders, since they do not "look the part", need to prove that they are plausible leaders owing the traditional related characteristics such as strength and authoritativeness (Rhode 2002).

Observing the theme of leadership, and especially that of women in leadership, Klenke (2011, 4) underlines how theories are increasingly developing in the sense of shifting the focus from leaders to followers and are, thus, particularly fit for new organizational structures, above all team-based organizations, which are usually flatter and less hierarchical and where women are seen as "consensus builder, conciliators and collaborators; they are transformational leaders¹⁶" (Klenke 2010, 10). Moreover, it is of special relevance the recent attention given to the concept of context and its influence on the specific leadership style, in fact women's lives are inherently contextualized by intricate interconnections of personal, professional and community commitments (Klenke, 2011).

Klenke (2011, 16), pointing out that "a context is increasingly uncongenial for women leaders if it is male dominated, if the woman is a token or solo, if the task is masculine stereotypic, and if hierarchy and power are stressed over egalitarianism and influence", asserts that leaders seen as gender-incongruent, for instance female military officers, face explicit difficulties to achieve the required authority. On the other hand, though, this scholar, while acknowledging the importance of context, observed by means of various examples, did not make any analysis of the dynamics of gender, which

¹⁶ Klenke (2017, 10) defines transformational leadership as a motivational and flexible approach, focused not on the self-interests of leaders but on the common good.

is defined as “a social dynamic rather than a role” (Klenke 2017, 21) and then blurred with the concept of culture.

Vetter (2010) recognized, as well, the lack of any analysis of leadership within feminist thought, thus she tried to construe a feminist understanding of leadership by looking at the conceptualization of power, authority and representation in many feminist scholars. For instance, looking at care-focused feminism, she reveals how it connected virtues considered as “feminine”, like those of compassion and caring, supposed to be associated with the female experiences of childbearing and childrearing, to political life. Vetter (2010), in fact, argues that Tronto links the concept of ethics of care, characterized by features such as awareness of the needs of others; responsibility, in terms of context-related obligations; competence and responsiveness from those cared for, also to the political and public sphere. Moreover, she associates Young’s theory of representation, inspired by Foucault, to the newly developed notion of transformational leadership. Considering its complementary pillars of being a role model while empowering followers by means of focusing on values such as trust, confidence and creativity, Vetter (2010) manifests the strong connection of this notion with feminist principles, such as inclusion, collaboration and diversity.

Indeed, taking into account that both women’s leadership and participation are urgently required to bring about change¹⁷, a peculiar approach which has been theorized in fields such as development and human rights is the one known as “transformative feminist leadership” which looks at the way women’s movements can achieve an actual transformation of social structures promoting the status of women and other marginalized groups. According to Batliwala (2011, 51), in order to reconstruct structures, institutions and practices in the direction of equality, it is first of all necessary to analyse gender and social discrimination in the particular context of concern. This kind of leadership, therefore, needs to be transformative in relation to its goals, so as to permit female leaders to break free from the constraints of the patriarchal system, but also in relation to its style, in fact, as mentioned above, while “great man” theories of leadership put their focus on the exceptional characteristics of single leaders, transformational leadership theory is based on a collaborative process between leaders and followers, aimed at remodelling simultaneously individuals and the broader social context (Burns 1978; Bass 1985). Therefore, it is easy to see the link with feminist principles of collaboration,

¹⁷ In this regard, the UN Secretary-General’s first recommendation in his 2016 report on WPS was to bring “women’s participation and leadership to the core of peace and security efforts” (UN Secretary-General 2016, 30).

inclusiveness and egalitarianism, which address in unison individual and social transformation (Wakefield 2017)¹⁸.

Women's leadership and participation, thus, is built on two mutually influencing axis: in order to bring about societal transformation, it needs to engage with a feminist view of inclusion but in order to be concretely possible it also needs to be supported by the feminist movement, starting with feminist politicians at national levels¹⁹ (O'Reilly 2019, 200-201).

2.1.1 Women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes

In the late 1980s, in the area of feminist international relations, researchers like Cohn, Enloe and Cockburn revealed how the realm of "international peace and security" was a strongly masculinist environment. Indeed, scholars, in particular in the field of feminist security studies (FFS), confronted the absence of women in the discipline or their inclusion only in relation to the state as their protector or in their conventional association with peace. On the other hand, feminism can give new meanings to the theory and practice of security (Wibben 2010), for instance looking at the relationship between security and gendered violence (Shepherd 2008) or at what subjects constitute security issues (see the research of Moon, 1997, on camptown prostitution). As Basu (2013, 456) asserts, "feminist scholarships offers radical imaginings of security through the employment of gender", capable of including "all peoples and all nations based on a notion of extended kinship including the entire human family [...], as the security of each is best assured by the security of all" (Reardon 1990, 139). Sjoberg (2011, 121) underlines as well the inclusive approach of feminist security theorizing, which explores the question of who can "speak security" (Hansen 2000, 2012) making use, thus, of a bottom-up approach as opposed to the traditional top-down approach in security studies (McKay 2004, 160), which also allows to see the perspective of who is living war, as actual "war bodies" (Parashar 2013).

Even before the launch of this agenda, though, feminist researchers were already engaged in observing the relationship between women and war, their experiences of peace and security. Among the earliest works addressing the relation between gender and violence, especially important were Susan Rae Peterson's (1977) analysis of the "protection racket", Cynthia Enloe's (1983) study on militarized masculinities and Betty Reardon's (1985) research on sexism and the war system. Thus, earlier research was strongly influenced by concepts such as those of women's agency and

¹⁸ This concept also favours more inclusive approaches to security, such as that of human security, looking at the protection, well-being and participation of individuals and groups rather than state-centric understandings of national security.

¹⁹ Who can, for instance, work toward a global environment receptive to women's leadership in peace and security through the development of feminist foreign policies, as in the case of Sweden.

emancipation and women's/gender equality, which were at the core of most second wave feminism and liberal feminism, and thus arguing for women's capability and interest to fight according to essentially the same motivations as men (Peries 1998). Still a substantial part of feminist research and activism addressed the issue of militarism and militarization (particularly significant the work of Enloe in 1983), but very few of it looked at women's participation in war as active perpetrators of violence, for instance Koontz (1987) observed German women's engagement in Nazism.

In 1987 Elshtain published 'Women and War' which appeared as both a connection to and a rupture from previous feminist scholarship on war. Indeed, while already previous research had analysed various aspects of the interactions among women, peace and war (see for instance Greenwald 1990; Higonet et al. 1987; Molyneux 1985; Molyneux and Halliday 1981; Reif 1986; Woollacott 1994), it is only by the end of the 1980s that concepts like those of gender and intersectionality, as much as the affirmation of constructivist studies, replacing the limited analytical possibilities offered by the couple "women/women", permitted the development of new forms of feminist research.

These new theoretical frameworks favoured the examination of new kinds of racialized and sexualized femininities and masculinities (for example Cooper et al. 1989; Jeffords 1989; Macdonald 1987; Warner 1985), moreover growing interest was directed to understand how femininities and masculinities intersect with notions like heteronormativity, race and nationhood (Cooke and Woollacott 1993; Melman 1998). In fact, during the wars in the Falklands/Malvinas in 1982 and the First Gulf War in 1990-1991 British women were depicted as symbols of whiteness and nationhood (Seidel and Gunther 1988) while feminist standpoints were utilized by both Britain and the USA in order to foster war (Forder 1995); exploiting concepts of racism and Orientalism (Farmanfarmaian 1992). This new attention to gender and representation permitted to bring to a new way of examining masculinities (Bourke 1999; Cockburn and Žarkov 2002), which was inspired especially by Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity and permitted also to understand how war and political and military institutions create at once identities, ideologies and practices, but also social relations of power (Cohn and Enloe 2014; Zalewski and Parpart 1997). Fundamental in this trend was the effect of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, the Second Gulf War in 2003 and the scandal of Abu Ghraib in 2003 which put in the spotlight the mutual influence among conceptualizations of Orientalism, Islamophobia, racism, homophobia and sexism and the way we understand both war, violence and gender (Alexander and Hawkesworth 2008; Hunt and Rygiel 2006; Nguyen 2012) and the participation itself of women in violence (Enloe 2004a). Additionally, these historical events emphasized one more time the need for an intersectional view in research (Sexton and Lee 2006; Gordon 2006; Žarkov 2011).

Other crucial events in the evolution of feminist scholarship were the wars in Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s which brought to the front stage the almost exclusive framing of rape as a weapon of war and its identification as women's primary experience of war. The subsequent classification of women as "rape victims" (Žarkov 2018) led to exploit discussions on women's human rights toward new forms of humanitarianism and intervention (Jacoby 2015). Still, this focus in feminist research step by step led to the prosecution of rape as a war crime at the ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the adoption of an international legal definition of rape and the acknowledgment of sexual violence as a protection issue in the framework of the WPS Agenda (Chinkin 1994; Mibenge 2013; Aroussi 2011; Kirby and Shepherd 2016).

On the other hand, while US feminist research has examined the connection between global neoliberal economy and militarism (Enloe 2010; 2013), Western feminism has been blamed for not being concerned by issues of global economic inequalities, redistribution and solidarity with women in the South (Fraser 2009; Jaquette 2003; Mohanty 2002), indeed neoliberalism is accepted as the solution to war itself, since "the Western model of capitalist, neoliberal economy is represented as a 'peace economy', disconnected from 'war economies' elsewhere" (Žarkov 2018, 29).

Finally, absolutely crucial has been the adoption of UNSCR 1325, in 2000, which was considered to be a first, even if partial, and pragmatic attempt to change the masculine paradigm of the realm of peace and security. An important effect of the adoption of this resolution has been the new attention to the themes of women, peace and security, resulting in a fast-growing area of research, even if focused mostly on some specific key issues.

Basu, Kirby and Shepherd (2020) outlined how among the ten most-cited works regarding the WPS Agenda the majority is centred on the dynamics of the UN Security Council (Shepherd 2008; Tryggestad 2009; Bell and O'Rourke 2010; Puechguirbal 2010; Willett 2010; Gibbings 2011; Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011; Shepherd 2011) while only two look beyond the UN (El-Bushra 2007; McLeod 2011). Moreover, a lot of the related literature confront wartime sexual violence (see for example Simić 2010; Aroussi 2017; Reilly 2018); the participation of women in peacekeeping (for example Henry 2012; Karim 2017; Deiana and McDonagh 2018) or the justification of humanitarian intervention on the basis of the same WPS Agenda (for example Dharmapuri 2013; Davies et al. 2015), while there is an overall criticism of the UN system. A lot of scholarship is also gradually engaging with "tensions" in the WPS Agenda (see for example Hudson 2013; Lee-Koo 2014; Kirby 2015; George and Shepherd 2016), especially its growing focus on the pillar of protection (Kirby and Shepherd 2016, 379).

Increasingly scholars are also addressing implementation, especially at the national level (for example Diop 2011; Lee-Koo 2014; True 2016; Swaine 2017) which has brought to a broad number of case studies and specific policy analysis, also in doctoral studies (Basu, Kirby and Shepherd 2020, 5). In fact, there is a lot of literature looking at issues in implementing the WPS Agenda, at its different levels (see for example Tryggestad 2009; Shawki 2017; Reiling 2017). Particularly important in this sense is the 2015 Global Study (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015). Looking, instead, at the reasons why the WPS fails to be effectively implemented, numerous studies address the issue of the lack of resources (see for example Willett 2010; Dharmapuri 2013; Shepherd and True 2014); the lack of political will (see for example Fujio 2008; George 2014; Basini and Ryan 2016); and the lack of understanding about which WPS principles should become a priority and operationalized (see for example Reeves 2012; Shepherd 2016). At the same time, there is considerable criticism about the way evidence is collected, monitored and evaluated (see for example Gumru and Fritz 2009; Fritz, Doering and Gumru 2011; Lee-Koo 2016). As a matter of fact, looking also at the striking claims displayed by the UN itself on the connection between women's participation and the durability and quality of peace, a major issue is that there is still very limited empirical proof to support them, because so far the number of women in peace process has been very little (Basu, Kirby, Shepherd 2020, 14-15). Thus, on the one hand it is necessary to be aware that gender is crucial in the analysis of conflict (Buvinic et al. 2012) and there are statistical correlations between specific gender equality indicators and the specific peacefulness of a country (Caprioli 2000; 2005), on the other hand it is necessary to have more data. Accordingly, research is more and more directed at producing the evidence on the basis of which to make valid claims about the implementation of this agenda (see for example O'Reilly et al. 2015; Paffenholz et al. 2016; Krause et al. 2018).

Indeed, the inclusion of feminist stances within the Security Council, by means of the adoption of the WPS Agenda, can be quite problematic: Heathcote (2011), for instance, condemns the exploitation of feminist arguments by the Security Council to justify on legal basis the use of force, a quite anti-feminist project. Moreover, as mentioned, the UNSCR 1325 has been criticized for several other reasons, including the absence of any investigation into the causes of gender inequality, such as patriarchy, masculinity and militarized power (Barnes 2011), or of conflict itself (Porter 2007). Particularly questionable has been considered the conflation of gender with women and femininity with peace, and the resulting exclusion of men and masculinity from the discussion (Shepherd 2013)²⁰.

²⁰ It is possible to acknowledge a major split between those who advocate the need for an approach focused on women and those who advocate the need for a broader gender analysis (O'Gorman 2014), while the former is best represented by

Indeed, this process of institutionalisation can bring to “the likelihood that the incorporation of a gender perspective is reduced to a technocratic tool in the hands of United Nations (UN) policymakers and peacekeeping personnel, seriously diluting SCR1325’s critical political potential” (Otto 2015, 4). Otto (2010b, 106), thus, talks of a “governance feminism”, which she blames for being used in a selective way in order “to serve institutional purposes” while letting “the tendency for protective stereotypes of women to normatively re-emerge”. Similarly Hudson (2013, 3) reproves the focus on what women, and gender equality, can bring in order to contribute to lasting peace and security, a view which reflects and spread an essentialist²¹ and narrow understanding of women, seen as a homogenous group with identical needs, interests and agency because of their shared gender (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2013, 2). In truth, gender theorists are often doubtful about efforts made by the international community to “mainstream” gender issues (Peterson 1992; Tickner 1992): Carpenter (2006), for instance, criticizes the choice itself of the label Women, Peace and Security which completely removes any concrete analysis of men and boys. Sjoberg (2007) censures as well the presence of gender stereotypes in the WPS Agenda and its essentializing assumptions, like the presumption that the simple inclusion of women will bring about peace. Notably, in the 20 years since the launch of the WPS Agenda, women’s participation has been grounded on different justifications, both in the field of policy making and in the academia: initially a rights-based approach was quite widespread, built on the acknowledgment that women must be granted the same rights and opportunities, especially considering that they represent half of the world population (Barnes 2011, 19; O’Reilly and Ó Súilleabháin 2013, 4; Gibbins 2011, 528). On the other hand, women’s participation has been framed in terms of effectiveness, as strategically important for instance in peace talks, where they can contribute also to safeguard a subsequent and lasting participation of women in political institutions (Chinkin 2003, 7; Bell and O’Rourke 2010, 948; UN Women 2012b, 12). Even if UNSCR 1325 does not make any specific mention to the notion of an “equal” participation of women in peace talks, which is a significant limitation (Aroussi 2015, 155)²².

Moreover, Hudson (2013, but see also Coomaraswamy 2015, 15) calls attention to the risks of framing women’s rights and gender equality in terms of security issues. In order to prevent this “securitization approach” in the WPS, with its tendency for gender essentialism, Powell suggests a “democratic legitimacy approach” which can show the way to “inclusive security-emphasizing that

the WPS policy field (Otto 2018; Goetz and Jenkins 2018), the latter, known also as “gender-relational”, look at the whole society, embodying intersectionality (Žarkov 2018; Rooney 2018).

²¹ Critical feminist scholars (such as Young) criticized the liberal feminist interpretation of gender, accusing it of gender essentialism, that is of supporting the belief in the existence of certain universal and innate features of gender.

²² Still Bell and O’Rourke (2010, 954) found that while before the year 2000, when UNSCR 1325 was adopted, only 11 percent of peace agreements mentioned women, in 2010 27 percent mentioned women.

women's participation enhances the representativeness, democracy, and fairness of the process as a whole” (Powell 2016, 272).

Thus, the scholarship concerning the WPS is broad and rapidly growing, in fact the norms of this agenda are a work in progress, whose content is contested and dynamic (see for instance Wiener's, 2009, theory of contestation which looks at norms for their “meaning in use” rather than their literal articulation) and can, thence, have various “concrete effects” (Krook and True 2012, 105)

Still, contemporary security feminism, now conveyed even through “the halls of power” (Halley 2006), even if it has produced UNSCR 1325 (Cohn 2013), as already mentioned, is currently criticized for justifying imperialist violence in the name of “securing women”, as in the case of the feminist support for the US invasion of Afghanistan (Russo 2006). As a matter of fact, this “womenandsecurity” nexus reinforces the long representation of femininity as pacific, passive and in need of masculinized protection as it is possible to observe also by the assessment that there is much more research on women's peace activism than on women's martial violence, which is seen as exceptional, personal, or deviant instead of typical, political, or normal (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Gentry and Sjoberg 2015). On the other hand, ongoing feminist research is focusing not only on topics related to the context of war and state institutions (Cuomo 1996), observing for example family dynamics, given the role played by military spouses, primarily wives (Enloe 2000; Horn 2009) and mothers (Eichler 2012; Christensen 2016), but is also interested in the emergence of a new form of militarism in the West. Indeed Western states are not anymore only focused on “the protection of the feminized nation by the masculinized nation-state” (Eichler 2019, 163) but see themselves as having a collective responsibility in terms of protectors of the global South (Doty 1996; Orford 2011; Hall and Shepherd 2013), by means even of military interventions, which, as instruments to affirm the superiority of Western states while keeping global inequalities in place (Agathangelou and Ling 2003; Whitworth 2004; O'Reilly 2012), are deeply gendered and racialized (Wilcox 2009).

2.1.2 Women's leadership and participation in the armed forces

It is, first of all, crucial to consider that overall scholarship concerning the military institutions has been developed within the broad field of sociology, particularly for what regards the relationship between the armed forces and society. Scholars have especially focused on developing state of the art descriptions of the study itself of war and the military (Lang 1969, 1972; Harries-Jenkins and Moskos 1981; Edmonds 1988; Kurtz 1992; Parmar 1999; Kümmel and Prüfert 2000; Callaghan and Kernic 2003; Caforio 2006; Kestnbaum 2009); on factors which at the social, institutional and intellectual

level explain the interest, or the lack of it, in the study of war and the military (Dandeker 2000, Ender and Gibson 2005, Malesevic 2010) and finally on understanding the role of military sociology within the broader field of sociology (Caforio 2007). None of these works, though, displayed any specific gender perspective.

Looking at women as leaders in the military, Stiehm (2010, 106) illustrates how training for leadership requires first of all training for “followership” in order to acquire the competence for teamwork. Even taking into account the very distinct nature of the military, in fact “nothing democratic about the military is democratic” (Stiehm, 2010, 110), Stiehm (2010) pinpoints as crucial requisites for leaders’ interpersonal skills such as counselling, leading by example, the capability to communicate and understand the beliefs and feelings of their subordinates. Indeed, in the US Army the ideal leader needs to present empathy, namely, to be able to identify with another’s feelings but also to have “the desire to care for and take care of Soldiers and others” (Army Leadership, 2006, as cited in Stiehm 2010, 106). This focus on empathy and caring is closely connected to the feminist concept of ethics of care and like the former is directly related to the core military value of cohesion, the latter is directly related to the core feminist value of interconnectedness (Stiehm 2010).

Klenke (2011 and 2017) emphasized the relevance of the specific context in understanding leadership styles, in fact the military institution has a very unique mission which can be reached thanks to leaders characterized by the ability to motivate their subordinates offering a sense of purpose and direction, still peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts are now transforming this organization as well (Klenke 2017, 338). Considering the central role played by combat within the military institution and its connection with a transformational leadership style, Klenke (2017) argues that this model is more typical of female rather than male leaders, moreover the nature of combat itself is changing and interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly more relevant (Klenke 2011).

Institutions and norms have a central function in the construction of identities and meanings: institutions are rooted in norms and norms are rooted in institutions but they acquire life only through the interaction with and the performance of individuals, including during peacekeeping or military exercises (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012, 3-4). Likewise, institutions are gendered, thence the “construction of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture of the institution rather than existing out in society” (Kenney 1996, 456). Thus, a “women-in-institutions approach”, based on a questionable “add-women and stir” strategy, which depicts “institutions as entirely exogenous to societal structures and immune to power hierarchies” (Montoya 2016, 372), is doomed to fail.

Certainly a lot of fights for social change are characterized by a conflict between a “let us in” and a “set us free” side, but this struggle is especially intense for what regards war and militarization (Ferguson and Naylor 2016), and even more for what concerns the possibility and/or the right for women to serve in combat positions. In fact, soldiering is completely associated with masculinity²³ and accordingly women soldiers are a quintessential contradiction, they are “at best anomalies, neither properly female nor credibly soldiers” (Shekhawat 2015, 17). While the issue of women in combat is divisive for both feminist and military actors, rather than recurring to essentialist arguments claiming the positive effect brought by women’s participation on the ethos of the whole institution, an equality argument seems to be more convincing (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 274).

Indeed, there is not a unique feminist view on women and combat: in particular the tradition of anti-war and antimilitarist women’s movements and feminist stances has long precluded any debate about the exclusion of women from combat. Additionally, feminists have usually linked violence with male sexuality and nonviolence with the biological functions of mothering and nurturing. MacKinnon (1989) has stressed how the connection between male sexuality and force brings to violence against women, especially rape, battery and sexual harassment, Hartsock (1989) has similarly investigated the link between virility and violence, while Enloe (1983, 3-14) has highlighted how the notion of combat is primary to the notion of manhood and Reardon (1985) has argued that sexism and the war system are based on the same authoritarian values. Swerdlow (1989), Stiehm (1982) and Ruddick (1980) have looked at the association between nonviolence and the activities of caring for and raising children, in fact Ruddick (1980) asserts that the maternal instinct to preserve life and military destruction are totally contrary one to the other. Therefore, in view of this widespread feminist commitment to peace and pacifism, Held (1993) contends that women should look for a more meaningful equality, rather than the participation in the military on the same basis as men, they should fight in order to prevent war and thus make military combat and military service unnecessary. Segal (2008 23), likewise, asks if the goal is “to improve the conditions for the women inside” or “confront the practices of warfare itself”.

We can, therefore, observe the lack of a “unitary position being taken either by feminist groups, or women’s associations, or feminist scholars on the relation of women to issues of war, peace, security, and organized violence” (Carreiras 2006, 62). As a matter of fact, while initially feminists looked at the militarization of women as a fundamental right and a way to re-establish the power balance

23 Overall security, military and defence institutions have been constructed on the basis of a normative heterosexual masculinity (Kronsell 2012).

between the sexes (Pierson 1987, 208), particularly in the area of liberal feminism which strongly connected citizenship and the participation in the military (Jones 1990; Holm 1993), radical and socialist feminism rejected militarism, as an exemplary representation of patriarchy. Thence, whereas Enloe (1990) demands a widespread societal transformation, Chapkis (1981) acknowledges explicitly military interests as antagonistic to social, political and economic interests of women. On the other hand, Ruddick (1983) and Stiehm (1982) argues that if men have exclusive control of the means of violence, women are endangered since the dichotomy protector/ protected will remain unchanged and military and masculinist tenets supported. Thence Sebesta (1994) states that firstly it is necessary to reconvert the military. Considering the stream of pacifist and maternal feminism, Elshtain (1990), Richards (1990) and Tickner (1992) oppose this uncritical association of women and peace, indeed “[u]ntil such absolutist constructions are challenged (...) peace will remain a problem” (Elshtain 1990, 265).

Standpoint feminist literature, which supports the view that increasing the number of women in the military increases the likelihood of achieving expected goals by conveying unique skills (Bridges and Horsfall 2009), has strongly influenced the approach of NATO to the participation of women within the organization, claiming that their inclusion in leadership positions and in the military results in better policy and operational outcomes. Obradovic (2014) has analysed specifically women’s integration into the national armed forces of member states observing the role played by women’s movement and the practices developed with the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Very relevant has been also research on NATO’s partner nations, particularly paradigmatic the case of Sweden, which served as Gender Advisor (GENAD) for Allied Command Operations for several years in view of its peculiar expertise (Egnell, Hojem and Berts 2014).

Finally, looking at the literature on women’s participation in the military, it is important to notice that there is a relatively good amount of analysis of women’s integration into the armed forces by means of quantitative methods but there is still overall very little theoretical foundation to the research (Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 64). This is overall, though, an issue related to most of the literature in the field of military studies, indeed while, gradually, some works started to display a more reflexive approach (Kümmel and Prüfert 2000; Callaghan and Kernic 2003; Ouellet 2005; Caforio 2006; Caforio 2007; Kestbaum 2009; Battistelli et al. 2008; Burk and Segal, 2012), real landmark volumes in terms of reflexivity in the study of the military have been quite recent (Carreiras and Castro 2013; Soeters et al. 2014; Carreiras, Castro and Frederic 2016).

More recent scholarship has particularly addressed how the shift in military tasks, such as the increasing involvement of militaries in international missions and particularly peacekeeping, impact

military women (Bouta and Frerks 2002; Sion 2004; Carreiras 2004), so as the challenge brought by the need to manage diversity and emancipation has been the subject of much analysis (Richardson and Bosch 1999; Richardson, Bosch and Moelker 2007). In fact, even if historically the role of combatants has always belonged to men (Goldstein 2001), changes in the military institution, especially the shift from conscript to volunteer forces, the different nature of warfare, as well as feminist advocacy for equal citizenship, have brought about an expansion of women's presence in Western militaries (Elshtain 2000; Carreiras 2006).

Still, the ultimate question is: "do feminists want women to be included within the existing structures of power and opportunity, or do we want to subvert and transform those institutions in a more radical way?" (Ferguson and Naylor 2016, 509).

2.1.3 Women's leadership and participation in peacekeeping: from the Northern Sea to the Mediterranean

In order to understand how the WPS Agenda works in post-conflict states, Karim and Beardsley (2017) looked at the case study of UNMIL in Liberia, elaborating the concept of equal opportunity peacekeeping, as a form of peacekeeping which permits also to include "more marginalized identities and characteristics associated with nondominant forms of masculinity" (Karim and Beardsley 2017, 4). Indeed, seen the still inadequate comprehension and application of the principles of UNSCR 1325, women's participation in PKOs is restricted by gender power imbalances between the sexes and among genders, as it is easy to observe in the number of women participating in operations and the tasks they are assigned to in comparison to men (Karim and Beardsley 2017, 3).

Relying on a feminist institutionalism, with an empirically positivist approach, Karim and Beardsley (2017, 56) believe that institutional change is possible and can be induced by gendered processes from within. This institutional perspective is significant in the study of the military institutions; indeed institutions have a primary function in the construction of subjectivity, interest and meaning in political life by means of their organizational rules, norms and characteristics (Kronsell 2012, 9).

In view of the new model of post-national defence, Kronsell (2012) analyses the context of peacekeeping, which is essential to this paradigm, as it is interpreted by the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). The SAF are, in fact, an exemplary representative of a gender aware (committed to a systematic approach to gender and UNSCR1325) and post-national cosmopolitan military, which is

devoted to democratic values and the rule of law²⁴. It is, nevertheless, necessary to consider the challenges specifically connected to the context of PKOs, where different value systems are required to interact, in fact a cosmopolitan military needs to be able to cooperate with military and civilian personnel with dissimilar viewpoints.

According to different scholars, see for instance Kronsell (2012), Eduards (2012) and Penttinen (2012), the most important challenge for post-national militaries is to attract more women, given that the very few women within these institutions are prevented from identifying with and becoming an actual member of the organization because of their tiny number itself. Moreover, because of their scant number, they are employed in tasks associated with the fact of being a woman rather than their capability as soldiers or peacekeepers, which is similarly very detrimental for effective integration. Actually, while stereotypically feminine values such as caring and empathy, which were usually exploited in order to justify the exclusion of women from the military, are now celebrated as making them competent in their role of peacekeepers (Kronsell 2012), at the same time there is a strong essentialist and gender traditionalist approach (Kronsell 2012, Valenius 2007).

Looking at the sui-generis Scandinavian context, already in 1987 the Norwegian political scientist Hernes saw the potential for the Scandinavian welfare states to become “woman-friendly” and “state feminist” (Borchorst and Siim 2008, 208), in fact the emancipation of women at the political and social level is supported and delivered through the state social policies, bringing to “an optimistic acceptance of the state as an instrument of social change” (Kantola 2016, 917). In this setting the Danish and Swedish militaries which self-identify as “forces for good” (Bergman Rosamond 2014, 36) are characterized by “a cosmopolitan-minded ethic on military obligation in the post-Cold-War and post-9/11 eras” and clearly engaged with UNSCR 1325²⁵ (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018, 173). Similarly, Finnish peacekeepers display flexible constructions of masculinity which ranges from representations of “reliable professionals” and “sensitive dads” to “tough fighters” (Mäki-Rahkola and Myrntinen 2014).

In Sweden, distinguished by a specific internal and external representation as a gender-progressive, cosmopolitan-minded nation (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond 2016; Bergman Rosamond 2013; Kronsell 2012), there is quite a lot of research about military women’s performances and experiences

²⁴ In fact, while militarism values hierarchy and obedience to authority, cosmopolitanism focuses on common values and bonds among humans, emphasizing the centrality of human rights and disregarding borders and territories, which assigns to it a post-national characterization. It is anchored in the belief in a common morality from which universal principles of human rights and good governance are derived (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 190).

²⁵ In this sense, in 2012 Denmark and Sweden and the other Nordics established the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations in order to advance the “implementation of ... 1325 on Women, Peace and Security” (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018, 175)

and the effect of their participation in PKOs (Gustafsson 2006, 6). Indeed, women's participation in the SAF can be tracked back to the beginning of the 20th century when they entered through civil services and voluntary organisations (Andreasson 2016, 5). Though, only in 1989 women had the possibility to access all military occupations (Gustafsson 2006, 4). In addition, in 2018 Sweden reactivated the conscription system opening it to women, consequently Sweden is the second country in the world after Norway to have an effectively gender-neutral conscription system (Persson and Sundevall 2019, 2). Moreover, a recent evolution at the global level is the development of the concept of a "feminist foreign policy", which is connected to countries such as the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia, and more recently Mexico, but above all to Sweden (see Aggestam et al. 2018).

On the other hand, "the Swedish case is somewhat of a paradox" (Persson and Sundevall 2019, 13): as a matter of fact Sweden appears as a role model for what regards gender equality in the military, still the number of women within the SAF is quite low compared to the NATO countries. Moreover there are concerns regarding the actual integration of women in the armed forces considering the ongoing occurrence of acts of sexual harassment or the availability of equipment which is not suitable for women (Persson and Sundevall 2019, 13). Thus, even if Egnell (2016, 81) defines the armed forces as "the most masculine and patriarchal world of all", he believes that women can bring substantial contributions to the SAF, in fact they can improve military effectiveness, in terms of assuring a broader recruitment base, given the small size of the SAF, but also by bringing new capabilities (Egnell 2016, 77). Still he recognizes that "women are not by definition gender aware, or promoters of gender equality" (Egnell 2016, 84).

Likewise the participation of women in the Danish Armed Forces (DAF) is quite old: in 1934 women gained access by means of voluntary corps and in 1962 they were allowed to join on a voluntary basis, even if only in 1992 all the barriers to their participation were removed (Schaub et al. 2012, 4). In 1993 the DAF adopted its first plan on diversity which centres on recruiting women and people of different ethnic background and on increasing their retention, for instance focusing on the fight against sexual harassment (Schaub et al. 2012). Indeed, women soldiers are considered to act as "role models for the local population" (Bergman Rosamond and Kronsell 2018, 178) and are viewed as essential in order to interact with the locals (Bergman Rosamond 2014, 35). Still, also the DAF, despite the fact that the external society and, apparently, the military institution itself seem to be quite progressive in terms of gender equality, has had many difficulties in recruiting more women.

The same pattern can be observed also in relation to Norway. Ronnes and Fasting (2017, 152) describe Norwegian soldiers as shifting their identification from "Polar Heroes" to "Global Warriors and

Champions in Gender Equality”, indeed Norway has been among the top three countries in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report for numerous consecutive years and it is committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 which has led to the adoption of a White Paper in 2007 to increase the number of women within the military. Still, most of the other NATO countries have more women in their armed forces than Norway (Skjelsbæk and Tryggestad 2011), even if with the extension of conscription to women in 2015 the numbers are likely to gradually change, in fact in 2017 the percentage of women in the Norwegian armed forces was 11.6%, slightly more than the NATO average 11.1% (NATO 2017).

Therefore it is possible to observe that, notwithstanding the overall high level of gender equality in the broader society has had a direct impact on the armed forces, translated in more than 30 years of explicit policies to increase women’s leadership, these three Scandinavian countries “have not been very successful in reaching a more balanced gender distribution in the Armed Forces” (Sand and Fasting 2012, 12).

In comparison to the Scandinavian context, the Italian one is quite unlike, if not just the opposite, and it is, additionally, characterized by a strong characterization of the Italian Armed Forces (IAF) in terms of a peculiar “Italian” style in PKOs, given that the “Italian military seems to be more humanitarian than others” (Farina 2014a, 354). Indeed, the deployment of Italian troops abroad is grounded on common values such as multilateralism, peace and humanitarianism (Foradori 2018, 508).

Though, while there is increasing attention to the specific role of Italy in the overall development of peacekeeping (see for instance Caracciolo and Montuoro 2017; Ruffa 2018), looking at the inclusion of women in the armed forces, it is fundamental to notice that “there are no studies on this topic” (Farina 2014a, 347). This can be due to the fact that Italy has admitted women into the military only in 2000, being this way the last NATO country to open military service to women, but even more it can depend on the fact that there is a “traditional structural distance between the armed forces and society, and little involvement of civil scholars in this field of study and research. Attention on this topic has paradoxically even waned since females began to be recruited” (Farina 2014a, 347). In addition, the IAF displays a spontaneous approach to gender integration, characterized by little formality, that can be defined as a “laissez-faire” strategy (Farina 2014a, 352). On the other hand, though, research about the military has been quite limited, especially among civilian and academics scholars (and even more among female ones), thus there is still little communication between the military and society (Carreiras, Castro and Frederic 2016, 176).

Farina (2013) suggests that this absence of internal discussion on gender relations can be linked to a form of cultural-relational flexibility of Italian people, reluctant to place interpersonal relations within the borders of specific procedures and norms (Farina 2013). Though, this lack of analysis is quite problematic as it does not allow to understand how the military organization, whose foundations based on masculinity are now shaking, is managing the process and dealing with diversity (Farina 2014b). In fact, according to Farina (2014a, 360) “there seems to be no room for a party other than male in the Italian armed forces. Inside the military, so far, seems to be only room for homogeneity”. Likewise other scholars have underlined difficulties in accepting women’s participation in the IAF, which always interacted with women as external subjects, never as comrades (Ricotta and Sola 2003). In order to avoid that women are integrated in the armed forces only as tokens, Ricotta and Sola (2003) advise that rather than trying to absorb women in the traditional military culture, a new delineation of the military and the female and male roles connected to it would be required, working toward more flexibility, complexity and multidimensionality.

The reaction of the male military institution to the entrance of women was essentially a formal acceptance of the organizational change (Ammendola and Galantino, 2004). The common rhetoric is oriented towards social desirability of female participation to society and its institutions. The cognitive dissonance that arises when having to accept an element, the female one, which is culturally and deeply extraneous to the organization, is thus resolved with this sentence: “in the organization there are no men or women, we are all soldiers.” This attitude is not necessarily required by the organization’s management, but it can also spontaneously emerge as a form of acceptance of what is considered as socially and politically correct. The result of this approach is that women, in order to feel integrated in the organization, often need to adapt to the dominant cultural models, which are indeed the ones of a male society.

We can conclude this review of the literature on women’s leadership and participation in peace and security processes by observing that, although it is possible now to find many different handbooks collecting scholarship on specific but wide topics within this huge category, see for instance Woodward and Duncanson (2017) on gender and the military; Ní Aoláin, Cahn, Haynes and Valji (2018b) on gender and conflict; Koops, MacQueen, Tardy and Williams (2015) on the United Nations peacekeeping operations; Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg (2019) on gender and security; Davies and True (2019a) on women, peace and security; what still lacks is not only an explicit research within the Italian context, but overall a theoretical discussion, in the global context, about what is actually that we are looking for when we talk of women’s leadership and participation.

2.2 Feminist curiosity as the way forward

“Where are the women?” (Enloe 1989), is the fundamental question of the feminist movement. Indeed, as an exemplary representative of the curious feminist (Enloe 2004b), Simone de Beauvoir (1949) asked: “What is a woman?”, a question to which in her landmark work “the Second Sex” she partially answered as: “[...] humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being [...]. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other.”

Considering the previous literature review, it is clear how the core concepts of women’s leadership and participation, overall and in the specific contexts of military and peacekeeping institutions, have been studied almost exclusively within the feminist school of thought. Indeed, even if it is possible to conduct gender and political analysis without engaging with the feminist project of societal change (Kantola and Lombardo 2017), feminism is characterized by a specific gender sensitivity and, even more importantly, a specific curiosity toward women, which is not typical of other constructivist or critical theoretical approaches (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012, 1-2).

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of feminist thinking, which is everything but a monolithic ideology (Tong and Botts, 2018,1), and the complexity of a concept like that of gender, in fact feminism itself has been defined as “a cluster of contesting views on the gender problematic” (Verloo 2018, 22), gender can be understood in terms of “the social meaning given to the biological differences of sex”, thence it is “performative - a doing and constituting of the identity” (Cossman 2002, 281-282)²⁶. Accordingly, also “the ways women and men ‘perform’ in the peace and security sphere is socially constructed, rather than biologically inherent” (Powell 2016, 275-276). Moreover, as observed previously, while feminist research is particularly concerned with internal and external awareness and consciousness throughout the whole research project, overall the concept of reflexivity has played a minor role in military studies (Higate and Cameron 2006), an aspect which can be connected to the predominantly positivist structure of the discipline (Higate and Cameron 2006, 220) and to its connection to military agendas aimed at efficiency and effectiveness within the institution (Higate and Cameron 2006, 219).

²⁶ The action of gender “requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and a reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (Butler 1988, 526).

Thus, considering the dependent variable of this research, namely women's leadership and participation, and the major role played by the feminist movement not only in the discussion about women but also in struggling for achieving women's leadership and participation in every domain, it is important to look at the evolution of the very movement. While the first wave of feminism (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) fought for formal, political and economic rights for women, the second wave of feminism, which developed in the late 1960s, was distinguished by the struggle to bring what was considered as belonging to the private domain into the public one (especially for what regards sexuality) and for its battle against discrimination against women. Particularly important was the distinction between radical and liberal feminism, the former indeed focused mostly on addressing male control over and exploitation of women bodies and sexuality (Rubin 1975), analysing male sexual violence and pornography (Dworkin 1981) and even praising lesbian love as a political decision (Rich 1976); the latter took as starting points liberal beliefs in rational individualism and capitalism, thus seeking legal equality between women and men (Nussbaum and Glove 1995; West 1998) by means of a stance toward the integration of women rather than for separatism (Žarkov 2018, 18). Subsequently third world feminism and post-colonial feminism started criticizing the ethnocentrism and exclusive focus on white, upper-class, heterosexual women's experiences of classical feminism (hooks 1981; Rajan 1993; Alexander and Mohanty 1997), arguing that "female solidarity must be built, not assumed" (Žarkov 2018, 19). Furthermore, from the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, so called "femocrats", a term used to define feminists entering in national and international institutions, brought women's and gender issues in the political agendas, which while raising attention to women's issues worldwide has also been criticized for the co-optation and instrumentalization of feminism by the same institutions (Crawford and Fox 2007; Stratigaki 2004). For instance, gender mainstreaming has been accused of becoming "gender away-streaming" (Mukhopadhyay 2004). During the same time and simultaneously with the affirmation of constructivism in the social sciences and social justice movements, feminism was met by some important theoretical developments: Scott (1986) underlined the complexity of gender, which is not fixed in binary opposition (women/men), and Crenshaw (1989) elaborated the concept of intersectionality²⁷. By the end of the 1990s, though, both these concepts

²⁷ At the beginning of the 90s, Collins studied the interaction between black feminism, postcolonial theory and feminist theory bringing to the development of identity politics, as a method to understand the construction of identity in its relationship with race, class and gender. In the meantime, Crenshaw elaborated the concept of intersectionality, which she understood as both a theoretical framework and a strategy for empirical research which permits to look at the intersections between the different factors which impact on individual identities. Specifically, she distinguished structural intersectionality, which describes women of colour as qualitatively different; political intersectionality and finally representational intersectionality, which relates to the cultural description of women of colour. Hereby, an intersectional approach allows to recognize "the complexity and transient nature of identity and of experience" (Frost and Elichaooff

were criticized on the basis that: “If we are not justified in taking women as a category, then what political grounding does feminism have?” (Grosz 1990, 341).

First Wave	Second Wave	Third Wave	Postfeminism
Late 19th–early 20th century	1960s–1970s	1990s–present	2000–present
Known as the “ suffrage ” period, and its activists as “suffragettes,” as it focused on securing voting and basic equal rights for women.	Focused on the right to education, work, equal pay. Challenged traditional representations and roles of women.	Challenged and to some degree broadened the pervasively White, middle-class orientation and agendas of second-wave feminism, including not only working-class women and women of color, but also non-“feminine” women’s concerns, such as queer feminisms , “girl power,” and “ladette” culture in the United Kingdom.	Addresses the perception that feminism is either “over” or no longer relevant to the younger generation. Postfeminism celebrates sexuality, “femininity,” and the impossibility of essentializing “women” under a feminist banner.

Figure 3: Timeline of the feminist movement (Leavy and Harris 2019, 21)

In spite of the claim that “feminists appear to distrust legal reforms because of the tendency of such reforms to tame radical impulses”, sustaining “prevailing conservative or neoliberal ideologies, rather than challenge them” (Chamallas 2013, 409); not only contemporary feminist researchers have got strongly involved with legal theory affecting the general women’s human rights movement, but since the beginning has engaged with the legal system.

During its first phase, spreading at least since the mid-Victorian age to the present time, even if mostly influent from the 1960s through to the mid-1980s, feminism fought to uncover the many means through which women have been excluded from public life. In a second phase, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s, the feminist movement started inquiring the broader legal and societal structures which preserve inequality, thus rather than focusing on revealing the male monopoly of law and its effects on women, it addressed “the deep-seated male orientation which infects all its practices”

2014, 61). In particular the intersectionality paradigm permits to include the substantive dimension of equality by uncovering social exclusion (see La Barbera 2017).

(Naffine 1990). Finally, while not rejecting the assumption of law's maleness, a third-phase feminism questioned the necessarily sexist functioning of the law and the legal system claiming that law is strongly contextualized, it reflects the society it is part of and then it is "as complex as that society" (Barnett 1998, 5). Therefore, in its current phase feminism overall repudiates the possibility of developing a "grand theory" while it acknowledges the controversial and uneasy role of law.

Observing the six main attributes of the human rights framework, namely universality, indivisibility, participation, accountability, transparency and non-discrimination (Balakrishnan and Dharmaraj 2019, 705), feminist authors put under focus the liberal construction of the notion of formal "equality", addressing in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international human rights instruments criticized for their androcentric bias which preserves the enduring separation between a private and a public sphere. On the other hand, Zwingel (2016, 9) reflects on the relevance of the human rights structure for the protection of women's rights, in fact human rights have a primary role in guiding states towards societal change (Zwingel 2016, 9). As a matter of fact, during the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, women's organizations adopted the new human rights language, using the slogan "women's rights as human rights" (Merry 2006), which shows how women's rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights, as recognized by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action²⁸. Additionally, the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Committee issued General Recommendation 19 which, defining violence against women as a violation of human rights, recognized discrimination against women and gender violence as human rights issues.

Further, since the end of the nineties feminist legal theory and jurisprudence have become officially endorsed in academia: while the former deals with theoretical constructions of the law and the latter with theoretical explanations about law, feminist legal thought is comprehensively characterized by the struggle to reveal the gender inequalities reproduced by the law and is "at one and the same time an academic, legal and political enterprise" (Barnett 1998, vii). As a matter of fact, Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which emerged in the legal studies in the early 1980s, strongly influenced feminist legal theory. Even if, by the mid-1980s, feminists argued against the marginalization of women within this branch (Chamallas 2013, 78-79), this school of thought, criticizing liberalism, its focus on individual autonomy and the separation of law and politics, had a deep impact in encouraging feminists to oppose the traditional representation of law and legal systems as rational, logical,

²⁸ Still, Pizarro Beleza (2013, 127) reminds us that: "Human Rights (HR) belong to all humans. This could be considered today as a simple truism. But the apparently obvious truth is not very old, totally universal or even consensual".

objective and coherent (Barnett 1998, 200). Feminist authors have, thence, scrutinized all the different fields of law, condemning for example the fact that in international humanitarian law the protection of the civilians is interpreted as subsidiary to “force protection”, which has a direct consequence on the application of the principle of proportionality (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 272) or that in the context of international criminal law, the endorsement of rape as a “weapon of war” could exactly lead to use rape accordingly (Halley et al. 2006).

Considering that constructivism is characterized by a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge along with a focus on historical and cultural specificity, which sees knowledge as contingent, that is also anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist, and linked to social processes and social action (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 5-6), this research is grounded on a feminist constructivist approach. Moreover, with an ontology based on historical realism²⁹ and a subjectivist³⁰ epistemology, it is also an interpretivist approach³¹, according to which the social world exists only through our interpretation of it (Halperin and Heath 2017, 5). It is important to consider, thus, that feminism is a reflectivist approach, like critical theories, which “would say that knowledge of social arrangements begins not with the world, but with the self” (Jackson 2011, 159). Thus, while reflectivism permits to include different perspectives and also to change perspectives as well (Jackson 2011, 185), “feminists can dispel distortions and mystifications that abound in malestream thought” (Hawkesworth 1989 as quoted in Jackson 2011, 181).

Moreover, a feminist perspective is mainly based on a critical paradigm³², defined by Scotland (2012, 13) as aimed at addressing “issues of social justice and marginalism” while the “emancipatory function of knowledge is embraced”. Indeed, knowledge “should be a resource for those who create, hold, and share it for informing social action to ameliorate inequities on the basis of gender” (Brisolara, as in Mertens and Stewart 2014, 339). Thus, seen that feminists have had a leading role in developing theories about situated knowledge (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 190); the very nature of critical theory is to investigate power relations, looking at the ways specific social and historical contexts, which interconnect with class, gender, race, ableism etc, oppress specific people and individuals (Frost and Elichaooff 2014, 54-55). Likewise, feminism not only is “fundamentally rooted

²⁹ According to Scotland (2012, 13): “Historical realism is the view that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values”.

³⁰ While ontology is concerned with “what is”, thus with the nature of the social world and its components, epistemology is concerned with what is knowable, thus with what type of knowledge can be considered legitimate (Halperin and Heath 2017, 26)

³¹ Halperin and Heath (2017, 27) associate with interpretivism approaches such as constructivism, feminism and post-modernism.

³² Scotland (2012, 13) asserts that: “Different theoretical perspectives of critical inquiry include: Marxism, queer theory and feminism”.

in an analysis of the global subordination of women” but it is “dedicated to its elimination” (Kinsella 2017, 191). Feminist research is therefore normative, aimed at putting women and their experiences in the spotlight whilst fighting against their oppression (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 190 ss.). Particularly, given that UNSCR 1325 is a clear result of feminist activism within global security, Kronsell (2012, 146) argues that it is time for feminism to take care of this matter and engage with international peace and security: women “can no longer represent peaceful and beautiful souls but must take responsibility for global relations in the field of war economy, militarism, and defense”.

To think like a feminist, hence, requires placing women at the centre, as Cain (1991, 20) asserts: “legal scholarship is not feminist unless it is grounded in women’s experience”. In order to do this, it is fundamental to be aware of the fact that identities are shaped by intersectional forces and are complex (for instance also women oppress other women) and to always asks “the woman question” in order to identify implicit male bias and male norms in what appears to be objective or gender-neutral, through a process which can be deconstructive or reconstructive (Chamallas 2013, 8). Moreover, feminist scholarship addresses double binds and dilemmas of difference, that is “situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation” (Chamallas 2013, 10), in fact to focus on gender can bring to brand a group as different and inferior, which can paradoxically strengthen the same gender discrimination. Finally, given that it is often affirmed that women’s subordinate status depends on their own choices, it is also imperative to observe the reproduction of patterns of dominance in decision making; thus, while legal thought represents the individual as a rational and self-accountable subject, feminist authors look at the influence of institutional structures and culture (Chamallas 2013, 14). Therefore, legal feminists confront issues of difference (in terms of differential treatment), subordination (as practices shaping gender inequality), devaluation (namely the cultural depreciation of a category equated with women or other marginalized groups), essentialism (which is the tendency to homogenize all the women, taking the part as representing the whole), victimization and normalization (which makes use of binary patterns in order to present one possibility as normal and the other as deviant) (Chamallas 2013, 27-30).

In the broad field of feminism this thesis makes mostly reference to critical feminism, which questions the neutral configuration of liberal feminism, defined by an inadequate consideration of the threat of gender essentialism and a simplistic understanding of power, interpreted as a social good whose reallocation does not need a fundamental societal change (Kinsella 2017). Further, in view of the specific context of this research, it is particularly relevant the institutional focus: in fact, constructivist paradigms focus on analysing the way institutions and norms construct identities and meanings, not

only norms are embedded in institutions and have implications for practice but also are constructed and enacted when individuals engage with them (for example while doing peacekeeping or military exercises) (Kronsell and Svedberg 2012, 3-4). Indeed, not only Connell (1987, 1995) underlines how institutions are gendered, but it is also critical to be aware of “the pervasiveness of tacit androcentrism in many institutional cultures and discourse”, supported by the complicity of both women and men (Lazar 2007, 147).

Still, it is imperative to look at the backlash against feminism, ranging from evolutionary biology to right-wing and left-wing critique, indeed, as Faludi (1991, xx) argues: “the antifeminist backlash has been set off not by women’s achievement of full equality but by the increased possibility that they might win it. It is a preemptive strike that stops women long before they reach the finish line”.

3. Research methodology and methods:

“For positive social change to occur we must imagine a reality that differs from what already exists” (Gloria Anzaldúa 2002, 5)

While the previous chapter has explored the literature review relevant for this study, building the theoretical paradigm of this research as well, this section aims to illustrate which methodology has been chosen and applied, examining the specific research design, methods and sources.

It is, thus, necessary to clarify the terms employed: on the one hand, the term methodology indicates the choice of a certain approach, as connected to the theoretical understandings and conceptual paradigms which support the research itself; on the other hand, the term method refers to the specific technique selected, such as quantitative or qualitative methods, and the particular analytical tools employed. Thus, methodology can be understood as “the stage between the theoretical understanding and the specific research design” (Andreassen et al. 2017, 1-2).

The development of a good methodology is fundamental taking into account that in order to define a piece of work scientific “the decisive issue is internal validity: whether, given our assumptions, our conclusions follow rigorously from the evidence and logical argumentation that we provide” (Jackson 2011, 22). Indeed, methodology is what “connects philosophical premises and substantive conclusions, and if our methodology is not clear and systematic, then there can be no meaningful scientific controversy about a claim” (Jackson 2011, 194).

A substantial reflection on the methodology of this study is particularly relevant considering that human rights research is often criticized for its methodological deficit (Andreassen et al 2017, 2), an aspect even more apparent among legal researchers than among social scientists (Coomans et al. 2010, 181). While this can depend on the fact that many human rights scholars are or were activists, nevertheless it results in a considerable absence of internal critical meditation, which is a major issue considering how much crucial methodology is in order to reach reliable results (Coomans et al. 2010, 183-184).

Specifically, this study is a qualitative research, particularly appropriate for elaborating accurate descriptions and explorations (Leavy and Harris 2019, 137), built on discourse analysis, which is considered to be a methodology, not just a method, indeed, “discourse analysis does not simply comprise a set of techniques for conducting structured, qualitative investigations of texts; it also

involves a set of assumptions concerning the constructive effects of language” (Phillips and Hardy 2011, 5). In discourse analysis, “theory and method are intertwined”, it is “a theoretical and methodological whole – a complete package” (Jørgensen and Phillips 4), as it is better outlined in the next paragraphs. Even if, as explained later, this research uses also descriptive statistics and, thus, can be considered a mixed-methods research, which gathers and combines both qualitative and quantitative data in the project (Leavy 2017), descriptive statistics are utilized mostly to support the findings of the discourse analysis, that is with a subordinate role.

3.1 Research design

In order to understand the role of the research design it is necessary to start with some questions. Indeed, a good research design, according to Halperin and Heath (2017, 5), is built on some specific questions: “1. What research question are you trying to answer? 2. What evidence or data do you need to answer the question? 3. How are you going to analyse the data, and what are the practical steps needed to obtain and record them?”.

Therefore, the research design, as a sequence which needs to logically connect the initial research questions to the empirical data and eventually to the conclusions of the study (Yin 2014, 28), is distinguished by some main components: the research questions, the propositions, the units of analysis, the logic connecting the data to the propositions and finally the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin 2014, 38).

This research is based on a comparative exploratory design (Streb 2010) focused on two case studies: Italy and Sweden. While it is possible to think that “[i]n a sense everything is comparative” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 153), assuming that N indicates the number of cases compared, usually the comparative framework distinguishes between large-N studies, small-N studies (like this one) and single-N studies (or case study). Further, taking into account the status of the current research, as revealed by the previous literature review, especially for what regards the Italian case, this study cannot but be still exploratory in nature and open for further future research. This characteristic is outlined also by the nature itself of the main research question, which is an empirical question and specifically a descriptive question (prone to be answered by in-depth case studies; Halperin and Heath 2017, 156), at the same time explanatory, predictive and even normative questions accompany the main question. In fact, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this study, the main research question addressed by this study is:

RQ: How is the WPS Agenda perceived to have influenced women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes within the Italian and Swedish armed forces?

A research question which is going to be answered looking simultaneously at some subsequent research questions:

SRQ1) *To what extent is the WPS Agenda implemented in the Italian and Swedish armed forces?*

SRQ2) *Can these institutions be considered as cosmopolitan organizations in the view of the post-national defence and the focus on human security?*

SRQ3) *To what extent are these institutions committed to the human right to peace and specifically engaged in protecting women's human rights?*

Exploratory research does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, in fact, even if it can explore the research topic with varying levels of depth (Singh 2007, 64), it “tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done” (Brown 2006, 43). Indeed, the possibility to comprehend the future role of the armed forces cannot but be grounded on predictions. Moreover, an exploratory design is quite necessary when considering that one of the two case-studies, Italy, as mentioned previously, is characterized by an environment where “there are no studies on this topic” (Farina 2014, 347).

On the other hand, Yin (2014) warns that for case studies, some theory development is strongly recommended before any data collection, so an exploratory case study should be introduced by clear considerations about what is to be explored, the purpose of the exploration and the criteria to assess the success of the exploration itself (Yin 2014, 39). As outlined in the preceding chapter, the theoretical framework of this study is built on feminism, which, considering that “[o]ne of the main goals of feminist research projects is to support social justice and social transformation” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 3), guides the analysis of the data and the recommendations for the future research by means of some clear theoretical normative stances.

3.1.1 The comparative multi-level approach

As stated above, to a certain extent all research is comparative in nature, since it always examines similarities and differences. Indeed, even a case study is usually always situated in a comparative context (Halperin and Heath 2017, 214) and an isolated single-country study has broader significance when it is conducted as an “implicit” comparison (Esser and Vliegthart 2017, d 5) which helps

building theoretical insight about a phenomenon (Andreassen et al. 2017, 247). Thus, a comparative approach aims at exploring diversity, interpreting cultural or historical significance and advancing theory, Halperin and Heath (2017, 212). **Further, in order to conduct comparative research, not only spatial (cross-territorial) comparisons should be supplemented by a longitudinal (cross-temporal) dimension so as to consider change over time; but the comparison can occur at many levels above and below the nation-state, which is especially relevant in the context of a multi-level analysis of the systems of governance involved in the implementation of the WPS Agenda.** In fact, this approach is particularly adapted in order to look at the different international, national and domestic levels of analysis affected (Halperin and Heath 2017, 213), which is essential considering that these case studies are in turn inserted and interpreted in an overall multi-level system of governance.

It is also necessary to note that in order to develop a mature comparative study the purpose of comparison must be made explicit and should be a determining component of the research design; the units of comparison must be clearly delineated, together with the specific factors influencing them and their context, and the comparison needs to be based on “at least one common, functionally equivalent dimension” among the objects of analysis (Esser and Vliegenthart 2017, 3). Hence, comparative research is a process which starts by providing contextual descriptions as a means to build functional equivalents and develop classifications and typologies which, finally, require to be explained (Esser and Vliegenthart 2017, 4).

According to the theoretical architecture of this research, this comparative and multi-level study, “as with every concrete research practice utilized by reflexivists” is conducted in order “to promote and provoke social change, by unsettling supposedly firm notions and freeing up the possibility of their dialectical transformation” (Jackson 2011, 201). **Moreover, the relevance given to the context in a comparative study, in fact “theorizing the role of context is precisely what comparative analysis is about” (Mancini and Hallin 2012, 515 as quoted in Esser and Vliegenthart 2017, 3), matches with the parallel importance given to the context in a critical discourse analysis, which is the specific strategy employed in this research.**

3.1.2 The case studies

As mentioned above, this study is based on a small-N comparison of two different cases and built on the approach of the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD), known also as Most Different Systems – Similar Outcome designs, which tries to identify which characteristics are the same among

otherwise different systems, selected because of the specific contextual conditions affecting the object of analysis, in order to explain similarities in a particular outcome (Esser and Vliegthart 2017, 6).

Still, this design, which has been specifically engaged in the selection of the cases, has been necessarily adapted to the overall interpretative design of this research, but also to the specific multi-level system of governance where the WPS Agenda is developed, implemented and interpreted. In fact, the analysis of Italy and Sweden has been preceded by an overall analysis of the whole multi-level system made up by the UN, NATO, EU, OSCE and CoE framework.

Looking specifically at Italy and Sweden, we can immediately notice that they are apparently two very opposite countries in terms particularly of a gender equality historical background, gender equality policies but also of the gender equality actual reality³³.

As delineated through the previous literature review, Italy is characterized by an environment where policies to address the imbalance between the genders have been hesitant and progress in the legal area has been promoted mainly thanks to directives from the EU or the pressures of the civil society. Italy lacks an adequate structure at the central level to promote, coordinate and monitor initiatives in favour of gender equality (Rosselli 2014). Moreover, women were allowed to enter into the armed forces only in 2000, at the same time the Italian armed forces have shown since the beginning to be willing look at other countries best practices in the integration of women. Still, the overall context of Italy appears as a non-friendly environment for the development of feminist policies, especially in a sui-generis institution like the armed forces.

On the other hand, Sweden has a feminist government, which is

“committed to building a society in which girls and boys, women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives, and live their lives to their full potential. Gender equality is a human right and is ultimately a question of democracy, representation and social justice” (Government Offices of Sweden 2019, 1).

Moreover, the Swedish feminist policies have been highlighted by previous Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström, who in October 2014 stated that Sweden was going to pursue a feminist foreign policy, commitment reasserted also in the 2019 Statement of Foreign Policy:

³³ As stressed in the introduction of this research (see footnote number 11), some major and even defining characteristics of these countries have changed by the end of this work, as it is outlined in its conclusions.

“The Government will continue to pursue a feminist foreign policy – wholeheartedly, throughout the world. We see that a growing number of countries are being inspired and are following our lead. Sweden is a leader when it comes to giving greater attention to women, peace and security in the UN, the EU and the OSCE” (Wallström 2019, 3).

Particularly important is that in 2016 the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) have adopted a Handbook on gender, which makes explicit reference to the WPS Agenda, in 2021 they have also adopted a specific action plan for equality integration 2022 – 2025.

The characteristics mentioned so far make Sweden, differently than Italy, appear as a potentially friendly environment for the development of feminist policies. On the other hand, both these countries have still quite limited percentages of women, and women officers, in their armed forces.

At the same time both these countries are bound by the UN WPS Agenda, made up so far of ten resolutions of the Security Council, and have adopted national action plans for its implementation: Italy adopted the first National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 in 2010 and then revised it in 2014, 2016 and finally in 2020; Sweden in 2006, then revised it in 2009 and 2016.

The rationale behind this research is exactly to reflect on the implementation of the WPS Agenda within these, at least apparently, almost opposite cases in relation to the actual outcome of this process.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Considering the literature review examined in the previous chapter and the specific theoretical frame of this study, as well as the aim of it, a discourse analysis fits properly the design of this research since it is an interpretive and constructivist form of analysis (Halperin and Heath 2017, 336).

Discourse analysis adopts a strong social constructivist epistemology (Gergen 1999) and focuses its attention on the processes through which the social world is constructed and maintained. Accordingly, it is characterized by a strong emphasis on reflexivity and a rooted belief in the constructive effects of discourse, including those produced by the same researchers within the research community (Phillips and Hardy 2011, 2). Moreover, being grounded on the assumption that people act on the basis of specific beliefs or ideologies, which are socially and discursively constructed, discourse analysis is a kind of textual analysis which investigates not only “the relationship of a text to its

context”, in order to understand the meaning of the elements of a discourse, but also “the broader relations of power and authority which shape that context” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 335).

Discourse analysis is based on speech act theory, which starting from the studies of philosophers like Austin and Searle in the 1960s, can be identified with the statements that “[w]ords are deeds” (Wittgenstein 1980, 46) and therefore that a discourse is “a system of texts that bring objects into being” (Hardy 2001, 26), in a particular time and place, so that “discourse analysis is an exploration of language in context” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 337). Specifically, Michel Foucault, the major representative of post-structuralism (which can be considered a subcategory of social constructionism; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 6), focused his attention on power relations, as supported by particular historical institutions and embedded in discourses which in turn construct social reality (Halperin and Heath 2017, 338). Moreover, integrated by works such as that of Derrida (1976) on the deconstruction, among others, of the male/female binary within language, “Foucauldian discourse analysis has become a key method of research in feminist postmodern work” (Frost and Elichaooff 2014, 44).

As a reaction to post-structuralism, mostly criticized for its insufficient consideration of pre-existing social structures and power relationships, a new approach, called critical discourse analysis (CDA), was developed. An approach which can be considered critical “because it seeks to expose connections between language, power, and ideology” (Fairclough 2001, 4, as in Halperin and Heath 2017, 338) in the creation of knowledge (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 19-20). Particularly, critical discourse analysis is ‘critical’ because it aims to reveal the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power, and strives for contributing to social change along the lines of more equal power relations in communication processes and society in general (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 63-64). Indeed, carrying out critical research requires to investigate and analyse power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives which can help to criticize them towards social change (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 2), likewise Leavy and Harris (2019, 5) underline how a critical research approach aims at challenging the status quo.

At the same time CDA can be considered as a wide and heterogeneous group of different approaches to the study of language, ideology and power, as for instance those elaborated by scholars such as Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk (Fairclough and Wodak 1997), but still it is distinguished by its attention to “the potential emancipatory force of discourse analysis” (Lindekilde 2014, 198). Looking specifically at CDA as developed by Fairclough (see particularly Titscher et al. 2000, 148-154), the study of discourse can be understood as the study of how social reality is linguistically

constituted by means of the interplay between texts, discourses and wider contexts (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 3–4; Lindekilde 2014, 199). Thus, the mutual exchange among the “discursive unit” (the text), the “discursive practices” (production, dissemination, reception of texts) and the “social practices” (the wider order of discourses in society) is what builds reality (Fairclough 1992). Indeed, discourse itself can be defined as “an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, which brings an object into being” (Parker, 1992 as mentioned in Lindekilde 2014, 199).

Still, given that “differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent social life in different ways, different discourses” (Fairclough 2001, 123), texts are often sites of conflict in that they display discordant discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance. In fact, a defining feature of CDA is its concern with power which is considered a central factor in shaping social life and a major premise in the development of any theory of language. While power is strongly linked to relations based on difference, that mould social structures (Wodak 2001, 11), it is not exclusively an oppressive force, but it is also productive in its process of creation of discourse, knowledge, bodies and subjectivities (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 13).

Further, discourses are part of broader social practices, at the same time they are constituted by and constitute social reality (Lindekilde 2014, 205), indeed discursive practices are influenced by societal forces (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 61-62).

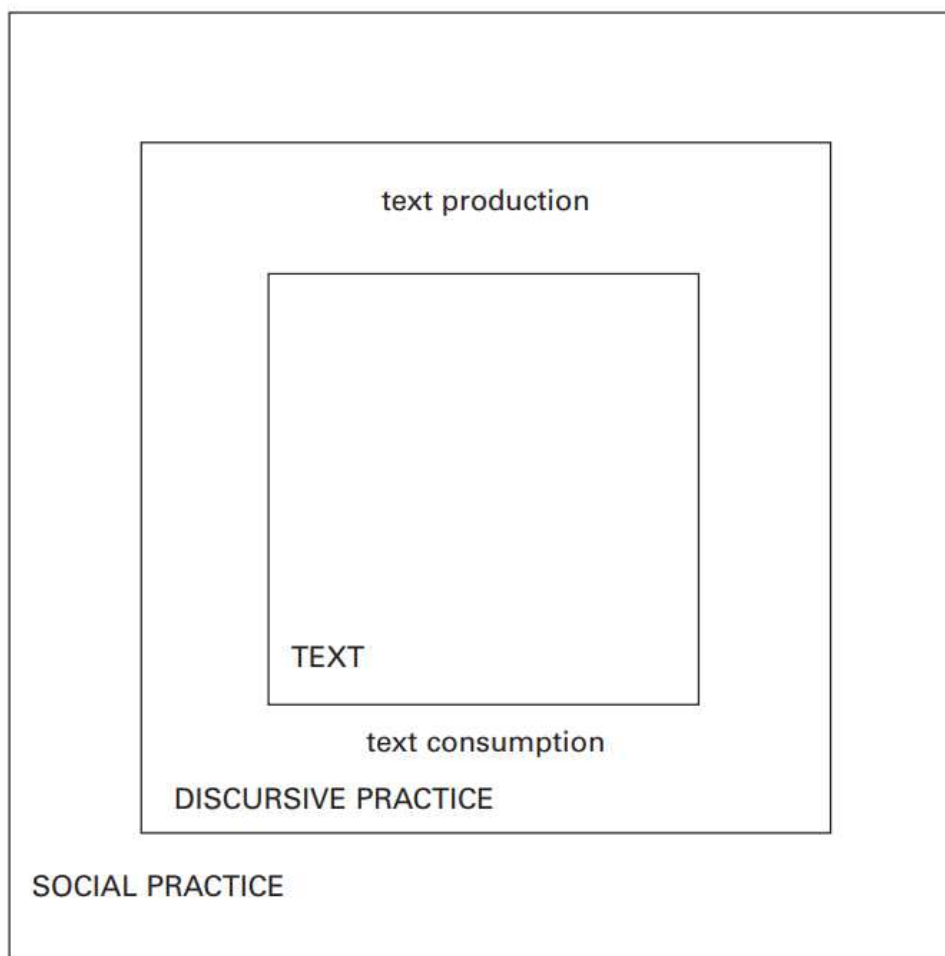


Figure 4: Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 68)

Taking into account that any text is part of a larger social context in which it is produced and consumed, it is especially necessary to look at this concept. Indeed, the discourse is considered as a process of social interaction (Titscher et al. 2000) in a dynamic relationship between a text and a specific context: its meaning can be understood only in relation to its broader context. Consequently, and in light also of the fact that discourses are not only connected to a particular culture, ideology or history, but also intertextually to other discourses, interpretations are never absolute but change according to new contexts and information (Titscher et al. 2000). Indeed, **discourse cannot be produced without a context and cannot be understood without taking that context into consideration, moreover, discourses are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 277).**

The context can be distinguished in terms of local and broad context (Titscher et al. 2000) or in terms of micro-discourse and macro-discourse (van Dijk 2001). In particular, the distal context “includes

things like social class, the ethnic composition of the participants, the institutions or sites where discourse occurs, and the ecological, regional, and cultural settings.” The proximate context, on the other hand, refers to the immediate features of the interaction including

“the sort of occasion or genre of interaction the participants take an episode to be (e.g., a consultation, an interrogation, a family meal-time), the sequences of talk in which particular events occur and the capacities in which people speak (as initiator or instructor or respondent)” (Wetherell 2001, 338).

Indeed, as a theoretical ideal, three-dimensional research should look simultaneously at the text and context being aware that discourse is “a constitutive part of its local and global, social and cultural contexts” (Fairclough 1995, 29).

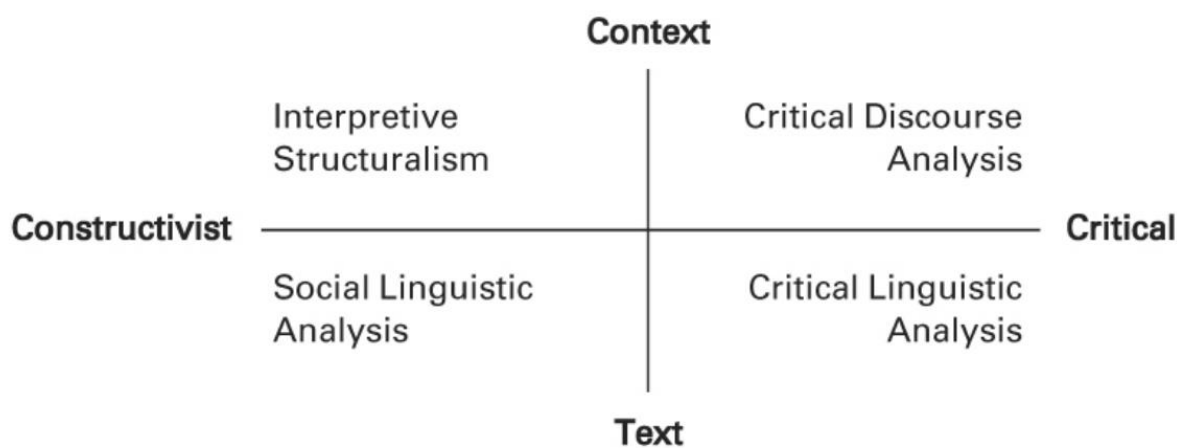


Figure 5: Different approaches to discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 20)

As outlined in the above diagram, CDA puts a peculiar emphasis on the context, a characteristic which fits particularly well with a case study, like this one, which is defined exactly by its focus on important contextual conditions (Yin and Davis 2007). Accordingly, a specific attention in this research has been put on outlining the broad contexts where discourses analysed are located, in fact chapters 4 and 6 are precisely dedicated to reflecting on women in the military institution and women in peace and security processes.

Considering the theoretical framework of this study, a specific feminist critical discourse analysis is the core of its design. Indeed, as mentioned, CDA is part of an emancipatory critical social science, “openly committed to the achievement of a just social order through a critique of discourse” (Lazar 2005, 5). In fact, CDA scholars play an advocacy role for groups who suffer from social discrimination (Meyer 2001, 15) and show an explicit commitment to furthering social justice

(Weninger 2008, 147). Indeed, Titscher and her colleagues (2000, 147) underline how CDA sees itself as “politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement: it seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships”. In fact, Pizarro Beleza underlines that “[d]iscursive power, like all power, is unevenly distributed and complex. The power to determine, to define, to label, to establish difference (the existence and meaning thereof) belongs to few. So does the power to be heard and to establish patterns or rules” (2013, 133).

Seen its focus on the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), a considerable number of feminist researchers have relied on CDA to produce illuminating analyses of gender-based discriminatory practices in a variety of discourse genres (Weninger 2008, 146).

Moreover, CDA centres not only on the role of participants in constructing meaning but also on the role of the author as “part of the process whereby meaning is constructed”, thus providing a strong reflexivity to the analysis (Halperin and Heath 2017, 356-357). In fact, discourse analysis is distinguished by a deeply reflexive approach, a “self-conscious analytical scrutiny” (England 1994, 82). (Hewitt 2009, 3). This is especially relevant considering that

“feminist research praxis-centralizes the relationship between the researcher and researched to balance differing levels of power and authority. Researchers practice reflexivity, a process by which they recognize, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions can influence the research” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 3).

Indeed, not only the researched or participant, but the researcher as well is generated by social structures and institutions (Hesse-Biber 2014, 200). Thus, it is as much important for the researchers to be aware of their own positionality, namely their positioning regarding the social and political context of the study (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014, as to acknowledge and include voices that are normally silenced (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 83)³⁴. Therefore, reflexivity is a “means for epistemological, methodological and ethical surveillance”, but also a “critical instrument” which can bring to social change (Carreiras, Castro and Frederic 2016, 13).) Overall, the requirement for

³⁴ a process which some authors (such as Condor 1997; Sampson 1991) have attempted to do also by means of so-called dialogical research, considered as a more democratic form of research which tries to include the informants’ voices in the production of the data and in the analysis of the results. At the same time this strategy could just be based on an apparent neutrality of the researchers which actually covers the real asymmetrical relationships within the research project (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 199).

researchers to be reflexive about their own position in the research process (MacLean 2013, 77), can diminish power gaps.

<i>Dimension of reflexivity</i>	<i>Role of discourse analysis</i>
Acknowledge that language constructs rather than reveals.	Discourse analysis rests on a basic assumption that language constructs social "reality" rather than acting as a route to the discovery of an objective reality.
Ground research in historical processes.	Discourse analysis is inherently processual in nature: We can only understand particular texts by understanding how they interact with broader discourses and other texts.
Allow different voices to pervade the text.	Discourse analysis is particularly interested in locating voices that are normally missed through more traditional research methods; by applying discourse analysis to research sites that are transparent, in crisis, or beset with struggle, we can uncover previously silenced voices.
Acknowledge that not all possible voices appear in the text, and those that do are not expressed on equal terms.	Discourse analysis is based on the premise that a discourse can never be studied in its entirety, merely that clues to it can be found in texts, of which only a small subset of texts can be identified, collected, and analyzed, reinforcing awareness of the incomplete nature of the research project, and the inevitable absence of some voices. In addition, critical discourse approaches that focus on how subjects are positioned differently by discourse provide a way to explore the positioning of subjects within an academic text.
Engender multiple meanings and alternate representations.	Discourse analysis is fundamentally interpretive, and discourse analytic techniques aim explicitly at uncovering multiple meanings and representations.
Engage in debate among and between theoretical communities.	Discourse analysis is not characterized by a unified, convergent theory, making theoretical totalization less of a risk; by using discourse analysis to inform and complement other bodies of theory, we can stimulate debate.
Take responsibility for our texts.	The lack of institutionalized techniques and rituals in discourse analysis makes it difficult to hide behind dominant conventions and rhetoric; instead, authors often have to "customize" their analysis and carefully explain their work.
Be aware of political aspects of research.	As discourse analysis is applied to empirical studies and the process of research, the political feature of the research process and our own writing becomes more apparent.

Figure 6: Reflexivity and Discourse Analysis (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 85-86)

3.2.1 Data gathering strategies

Considering that good data helps to make good inferences and draw strong conclusions, it is fundamental that the data is valid, thus it needs to authentically measure what is claimed to do, to be

reliable and to have been recorded accurately (Halperin and Heath 2017, 168). Still, this consideration fits very well with positivist standards, in a framework where “the social world is understood in terms of a relatively stable (and singular) truth that can be mirrored with ever greater accuracy in terms of general, a-historical, a-cultural laws” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 94).

On the other hand, this research is built by means of a discourse analysis, and specifically a critical discourse analysis, which is an interpretive and constructivist form of analysis (Halperin and Heath 2017, 336). Indeed, it can be argued that validity as “the idea that the research closely captures the ‘real’ world—is not relevant when epistemological and ontological assumptions maintain that there is no ‘real’ world other than one constructed through discourse” and likewise, reliability, as “the idea that the results are ‘repeatable’—is nonsensical when one is interested in generating and exploring multiple—and different—readings of a situation” (Wood and Kroger, 2000 as quoted in Phillips and Hardy 2002, 78-79). **Thence, considering the peculiar nature of Critical Discourse Analysis as an interpretive and constructivist form of analysis (Halperin and Heath 2017, 336), an appropriate validity criterion in assessing the whole research is that the research should be plausible to the community of scholars, thus a criterion of fruitfulness, emphasising the importance of the production of new knowledge (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 172).**

Notwithstanding these important epistemological and ontological assumptions, this chapter aims at clarifying as much as possible the plan of the whole study: first, looking at the data collected for the purposes of this study, as outlined in the next paragraphs, this research can clearly be identified as qualitative, even if integrated by some quantitative data in the form of descriptive statistics. Second, both primary and secondary data are collected; indeed, to use multiple sources of data and methods of data collection helps in approaching the research problems from different angles, a process called triangulation (Halperin and Heath 2017, 161).

Finally, it is paramount to consider the interconnection among the different phases of data collection, data analysis and data interpretation as shown in the diagrams below. This is a particularly relevant reflection, seen that Discourse Analysis, and even more Critical Discourse Analysis, is strongly influenced by Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where data collection is not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure (Meyer 2001, 18).

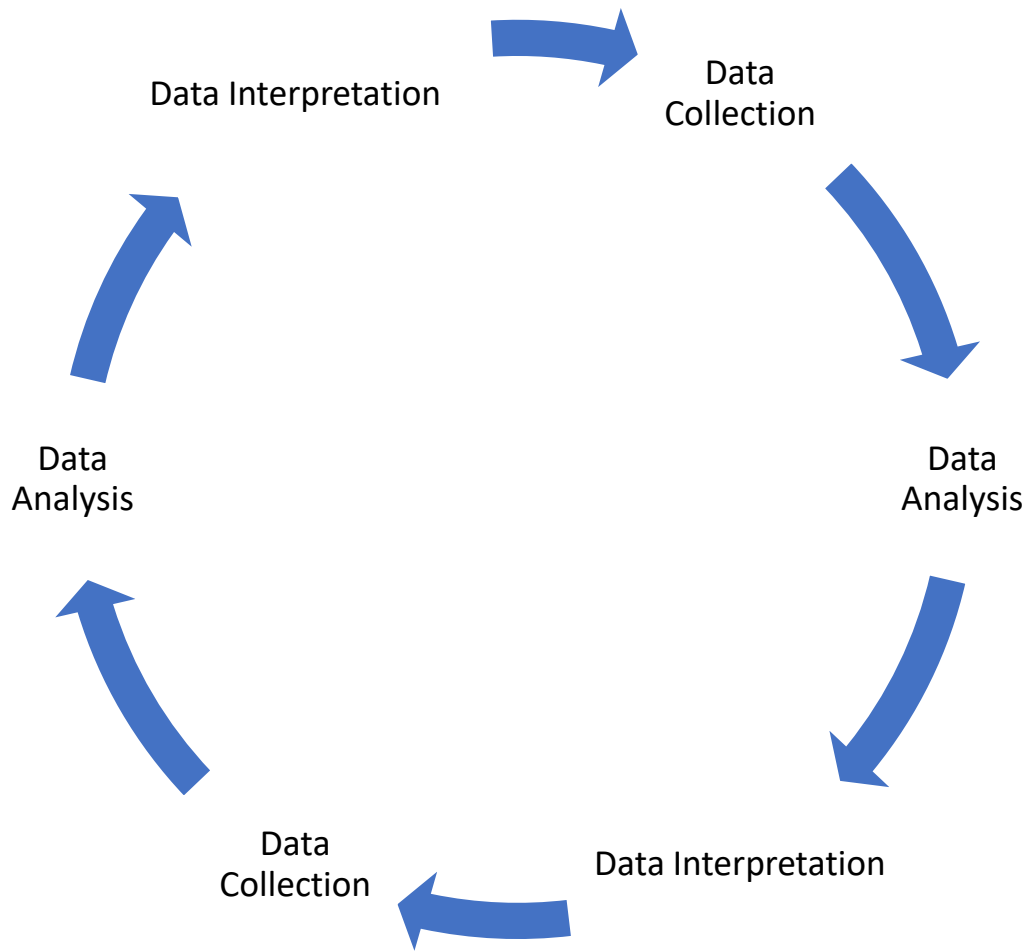


Figure 7: Process in the Analysis and Interpretation of Data (Hesse-Biber 2014, 408)

BETWEEN THEORY, POLITICS AND METHOD:

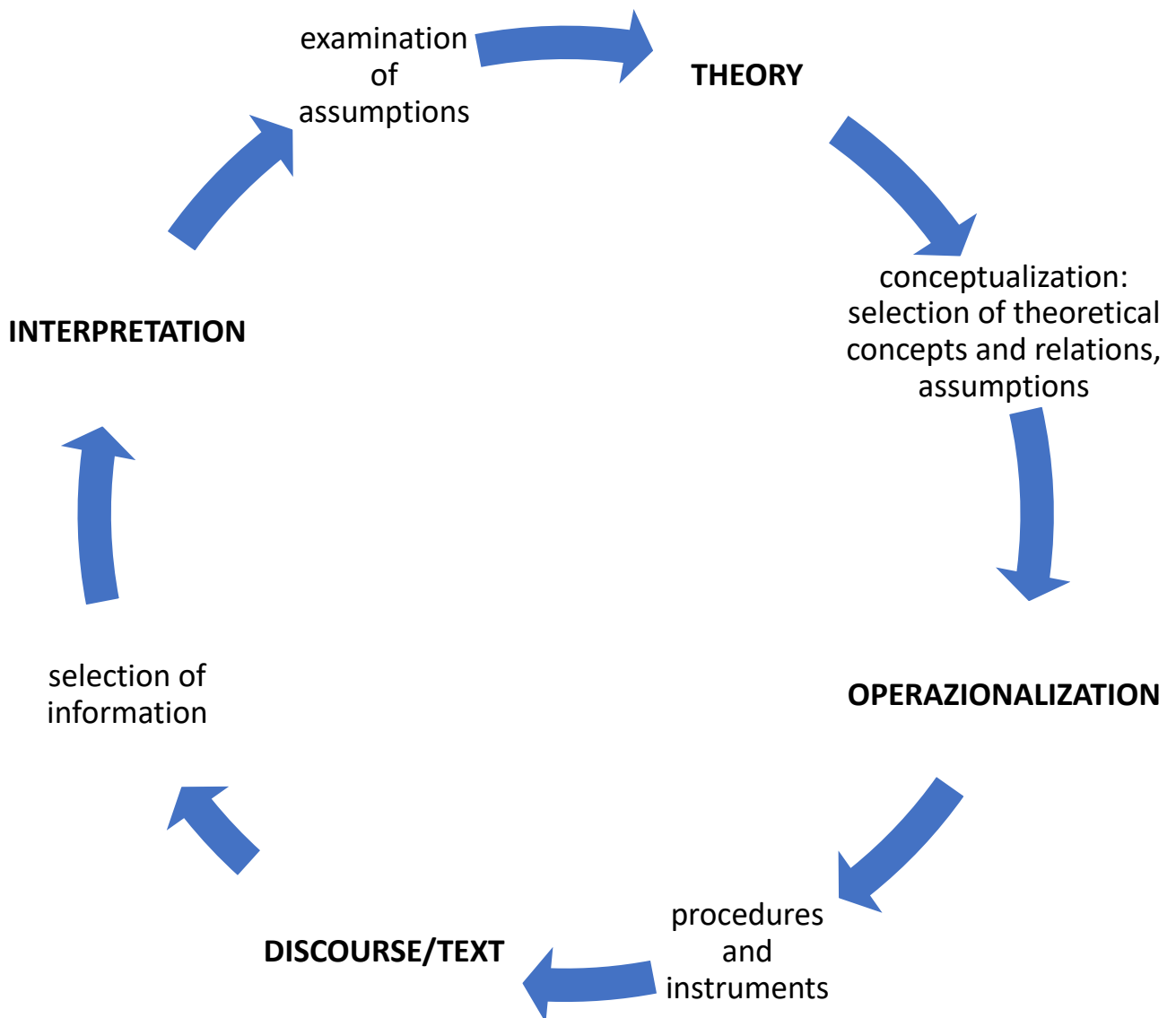


Figure 8: Empirical research as a circular process (Meyer 2001, 19)

Specifically, this investigation resorts to: Document Analysis, which helps “to identify story lines and metaphors, and the sites of discursive struggle”, taking particularly into account public policies, and interviews with key players, in order “to enable the researcher to construct the interviewee discourses and the shifts in recognition of alternative perspectives” (Hewitt 2009, 12).

3.2.1.1 CDA of public policies in a multi-level governance system

Doing discourse analysis researchers are likely to have difficulty defining the relevant population of texts to be included in the study (Lindekilde 2014, 211). Indeed, texts are part of discourses, that is

structured collections of texts, and acquire meaning only by relating intertextually to many other texts, through multiple and mutual relations in the specific context of their production (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 86). Moreover, texts can have very different forms (Grant, Keenoy and Oswick, 1998) and discourse analysis can also be carried out, for example, using transcripts of interviews (Lindekilde 2014, 211), as illustrated in the next paragraph.

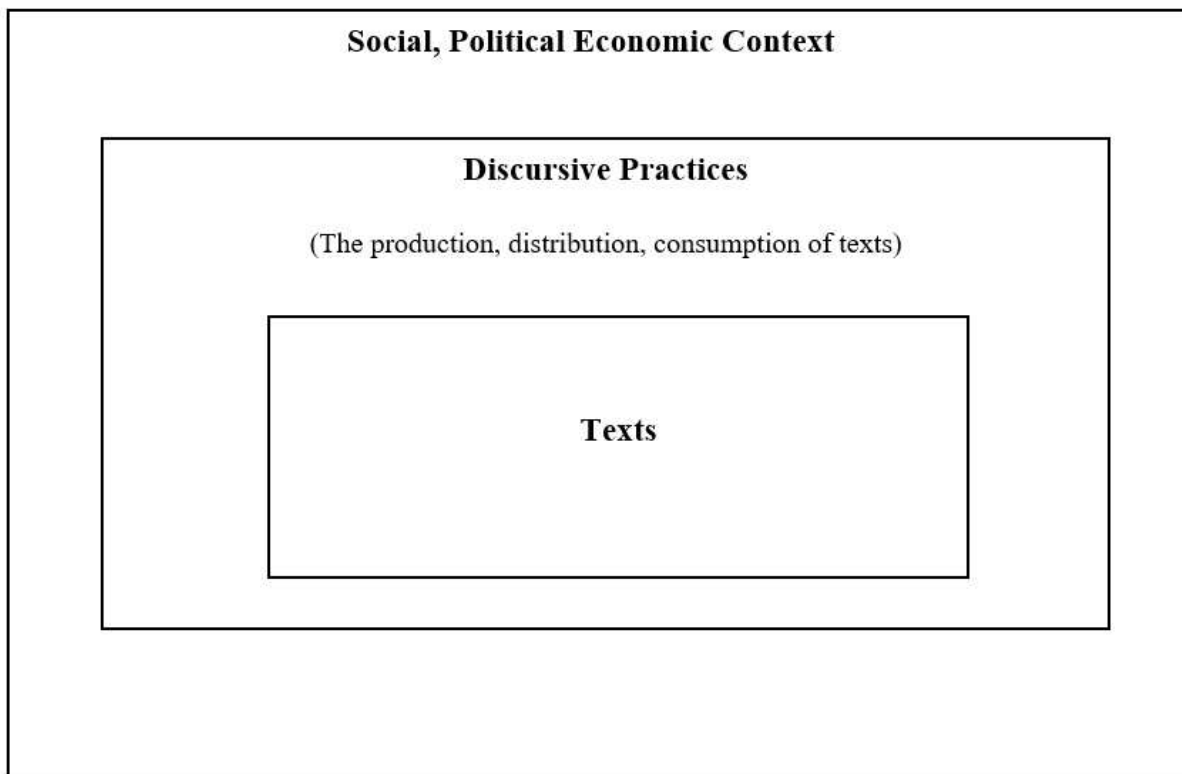


Figure 9: Text and context in discourse analysis (Halperin and Heath 2017, 341)

It is paramount to consider that texts are sampled intentionally on the basis of being particularly informative vis-à-vis the discourse of interest (Lindekilde 2014, 212), therefore, the collection of the required data for this research is based on CDA of public policies and political discourses such as government statements, briefs or reports, but an important source of analysis is constituted by legal documents and texts, at the different governance levels where the WPS Agenda is distributed. In fact, as discussed above, it is necessary to be aware of the epistemological premises of CDA which considers truth as constructed within a specific discourse and consequently in relation to the knowledge and practices of that discourse. Thus, even the methodological choices taken by the researcher are motivated by the concrete problem addressed in the study (Hewitt 2009, 3).

According to Fairclough, moreover, CDA should be distinguished by a pragmatic and problem-oriented approach, made up of some precise steps: in fact, after having identified and examined the

social problem to be addressed, it is necessary to go beyond the text, looking at its semiotic aspects (such as language) and distinguishing their main characteristics (such as coexisting dominant styles), in order to understand their dynamics. Overall, “a discourse-analytic study should demonstrate a careful reading of the text; provide an interpretation that is clearly related to the textual evidence; and present an interpretation which aims to be credible, plausible, coherent, and fruitful” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 344).

In particular, in this study, the different discourses embedded in the very texts of the different policies examined, or surrounding these very texts, have been analysed at all the different levels of the complex system of governance of the WPS Agenda. Starting from what can be considered the top, the UN system where the agenda has been adopted, through the different international actors specifically relevant in relation to the case studies under scrutiny, the study arrives to what can be considered to be relatively the bottom, that is the specific cases of Italy and Sweden.

In this process after having observed the WPS Agenda itself, the analysis has moved to the actual life of this agenda looking at the discourses existing within the different levels of governance where this agenda is interpreted and implemented. Accordingly, the framework of the UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, CoE and finally the Italian and Swedish contexts have been analysed, considering their mutual interconnection.

In the analysis particular relevance has been put on observing the most recurring terms and the related discourses but also on observing hegemonic narratives and subordinate or counternarratives through a critical feminist lens, for instance an omnipresent expression is “women’s leadership and participation”, which indeed is also a major constituent of the research question. Overall, thus, looking at the policies adopted the focus has been on highlighting the most frequent expressions examining the presence of terms being repeatedly utilized and the connected understanding of reality which they disclose. In particular it has been important to consider which descriptions of women and men these policies, and the related discourses, interpretations and definitions given, imply. In fact the themes introduced in the chapters 4 and 5 to trace the contexts from where these very discourses have originated reappear all over in the data. An outstanding example is the dichotomy between “beautiful souls” and “just warriors”, as already introduced by Elshtain at the beginning of the 1980s in order to describe a widespread representation of women and men, which is indeed extremely prolific being as well, explicitly or implicitly omnipresent. Let’s just look at this sentence from a major exponent of the Italian Armed Forces, in his "Analysis of the first results in the Italian Armed Forces" about the entry of women, as reported in the official website of the ministry of Defence: “Devo dire che le ragazze che ho visto operare con il fucile mitragliatore in caccia mi hanno fatto tenerezza [...]”, which

actually means that when he saw girls operating a machine gun he felt a sense of “tenderness”³⁵, which is actually a “gendered protection norm” describing men as protectors and women as in need of protection.

3.2.1.2 CDA of key informant interviews

The data collected through a process of content analysis are integrated by key informant (or elite) interviews with stakeholders within and outside of the institutions object of analysis (officers and civilians), based mainly on semi-structured interviews. In particular, in the context of the key-informant interviews within the armed forces the focus has been on officers, because of their specific expertise dependent on the tasks assigned to them within the institution and because, being the professional corps of the organization, they have a specific understanding of the organization compared to non-permanent personnel (Carreiras 2006, 24).

The specificity of key informant interviews is that they are used in order to gain specific information (della Porta 2014, 229). Indeed, they permit to access information that might not be available otherwise, to confirm the accuracy of information already collected (working as a form of triangulation), and to draw some conclusions about the beliefs or actions of the elites themselves (Halperin and Heath 2017, 298).

Informant interviews are characterized by an in-depth and less structured form (they are usually semi-structured or unstructured interviews) and are conducted with a small, selected set of informants in a field setting. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe, that is asking leading questions which bring the interviewee to discuss in further detail topics pertinent to the research (Halperin and Heath 2017, 285). The choice between different interview structures depends on the overall goals of the research project, in fact looking at the scheme below it is possible to observe that by moving from the bottom to the top “is to move from an exploratory data gathering and in-depth understanding goal of a project to a more theory-testing set of goals” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 188-189).

³⁵ See: <https://www.difesa.it/Content/ServizioFemminile/Pagine/AnalisiideiprimirisultatinellaFFAAitaliane.aspx> (accessed 20/11/2022).

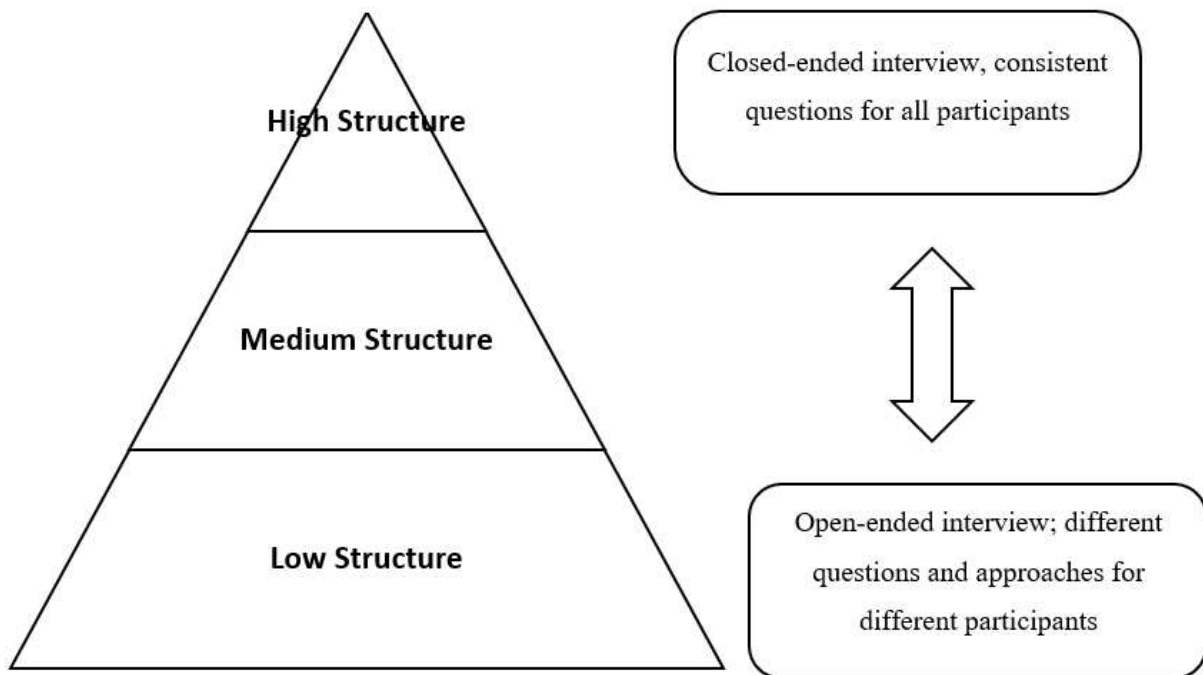


Figure 10: Types of Interview Structures (Hesse-Biber 2014, 188)

In this sense, thus, interviews are conducted with informants or informers, that is “people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are expert in an area or were privileged witnesses of an event; and people who, taken together, display what happens within a population affected by a situation or event” (Weiss 1994, 17). One of the main challenges for the interviewer is to be able to let the respondents provide the information about which they have expertise (indeed key informants are exactly chosen because of who they are or what position they occupy), while keeping the focus of the interview on the specific needs of the research programme displaying confidence and competence.

More generally, advantages and disadvantages of key informant interviews can be summarized as follows:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed and rich data can be gathered in a relatively easy and inexpensive way • Allows interviewer to establish rapport with the respondent and clarify questions • Provides an opportunity to build or strengthen relationships with important community informants and stakeholders • Can raise awareness, interest, and enthusiasm around an issue • Can contact informants to clarify issues as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting the “right” key informants may be difficult so they represent diverse backgrounds and viewpoints • May be challenging to reach and schedule interviews with busy and/or hard-to-reach respondents • Difficult to generalize results to the larger population unless interviewing many key informants

Figure 11: Advantages and Disadvantages of Key Informant Interviews (UCLA CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH 2004, 9)

Different types of interviews have been collected for the purposes of this study: individual face-to-face interviewing, telephone interviews and online interviews, in the form of semi-structured synchronous interviewing and asynchronous mailed questionnaires, in this last case necessarily in a structured form. Additionally, the selection of what needs to be transcribed has been determined by the research goals thanks to a process of interpretation (Jørgensen and Phillips, 80).

Since semi-structured interviews present an agenda, but they are open to new questions and there is room for spontaneity (Hesse-Biber 2014, 187), semi-structured interviews have been conducted according to a draft interview guide, as “a basic checklist of areas to be covered in the interview in the form of questions” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 290). On the other hand, structured interviews have been carried out in the form of email interviews. This form of interviews tends to reduce interviewer bias and, given the possibility to revise answers, enable increased flexibility and deeper reflection, it can also make it easier to discuss sensitive issues (Halperin and Heath 2017, 296).

In a feminist perspective, it is particularly important when interviewing to put specific emphasis “in issues of social change and social justice for women and other oppressed groups”, as much as on uncovering “the subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women’s realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 184). Moreover, while the whole process of the interview is shaped by power dynamics which inhabit the research project itself (MacLean 2013, 67), it is also possible

to recognize a “[c]ocreation of meaning”, a “give-and-take in the interview process” where the researcher and researched are co-participants (Hesse-Biber 2014, 191). Moreover, this is not a core issue in conducting elite interviews, in fact in the majority of the interviews collected, the possible power gap seems to be reversed in favour of the interviewees themselves rather than the interviewer.³⁶

In the case of elite interviews, it is necessary to make use of a purposive sampling which selects elements of a population according to specific characteristics, relevant for the analysis. Moreover, a snowball sampling, which seeks new respondents on the basis of the recommendations from earlier respondents (Lynch 2013, 41-42), has been employed. The number of interviews to collect depends on different factors, such as the resources available or the actual duration of each interview, but it is mostly connected to the criterion of the saturation of knowledge (della Porta 2014, 242). Overall, in this study more than thirty interviews have been collected, within the Italian context, the Swedish context and the very system of multi-level governance which characterizes this research.

3.2.2 Descriptive statistics on women’s leadership and participation in peace and security processes in the Italian and Swedish armed forces

Moreover, the findings of the CDA have been compared with descriptive statistics (Halperin and Heath 2017, 364), displayed graphically, in order to observe through quantitative evidence which is the status of women’s participation and leadership in peace and security processes in the Italian and Swedish armed forces. Supporting the qualitative analysis conducted through the CDA by the use of quantitative data can help better understanding the findings of this research.

In collecting statistical data, the notion of “positional leaders”, that is people who occupy positions of power which are recognized and rewarded in observable ways (AAUW 2016), has been utilised. Indeed, the term leadership has been defined through the analysis of how many leader roles are occupied by women. In the context of Sweden leadership positions have been considered as the ranks included in the list of Professional Officers (Yrkesofficerare), namely this list of ranks (as harmonised with the NATO codes in the SAF from 2008 and effective from 2009) in the category OF (Officer Ranks): OF-9; OF-8; OF-7; OF-6; OF-5; OF-4; OF-3; OF-2; OF-1 and OF-1. Similarly, in the Italian context the same ranks have been taken into account.

³⁶ Particularly in the military Ammendola and her colleagues (2016) found that there were no “fixed stereotypical hierarchies”, but researches and respondents were “inscribed in a multifaceted power relation” (Bhavnani 1993), where the same gender incongruence could both limit and assist their work (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001). Indeed, during the interview there is a weakening of hierarchical and top down control over military members (Ammendola et al. 2016).

3.2.3 Field research within the armed forces

The conclusions of this research have been strongly supported also by some direct field research carried out by means of direct participation to training courses at the Multinational CIMIC Group in Motta di Livenza (Treviso, Italy)³⁷, namely the Female Engagement Team Course (8-12 March 2021) and at the CoESPU (Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units)³⁸ in Vicenza, Italy. In the latter centre specifically the Gender Protection in UN Peace Operations Course (1-7 September 2021) and the Child Protection for UN Police Course (9-15 September 2021) were attended. Moreover, a visit to the UNIFIL mission in southern Lebanon, at the Headquarters and the Italian mission, was carried out in September 2022.

Field research is a qualitative method of data collection directed at observing, interacting and understanding people while they are in a natural environment. Field research is typically conducted by means of different distinctive methods, in particular Direct Observation, Participant Observation and Qualitative Interviews (informal and conversational, semi-structured and open-ended interviews) were used during the above-mentioned courses. This field research gave the opportunity to collect data even about ancillary topics and to gain a deep understanding of the research subjects due to the proximity to them.

3.3 Ethical concerns

Attention to ethical concerns was introduced by the Nuremberg Code, adopted in 1947 as a direct consequence of the Nuremberg trials, which introduced the requirement of voluntary participation and informed consent in research (Bell 2014, 74). As a matter of fact, conducting research is a process that implies many different ethical concerns, from the risk of seeking only supportive evidence, evading counter evidence, and that of plagiarizing or adulterating information and data, up to the need for professional competence, particularly the requirement of being accountable (Yin 2014, 76-77), which is strongly connected with the core concept of reflexivity (Leavy and Harris 2019, 103-104). Among ethical issues, the requirement of not doing any harm (non-maleficence), the requirement to treat other participants with dignity and respect and the principle of beneficence, including anti

³⁷ The Multinational CIMIC Group is an Italian-led multinational and inter-force department, affiliated to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, as NATO Affirmed Force, ready to support the Military Commander in Joint and Combined operations in the delicate sector of civil-military cooperation. In particular it organizes training activities based on the idea of teaching in the classroom what is learned in operations and applying what is learned in the classroom in operations.

³⁸ The Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) is a training centre of the Carabinieri for police units employed in peacekeeping operations which was founded on 1 March 2005 in Vicenza. A general of the carabinieri is in charge of its direction and has a colonel of the USA armed forces as deputy director.

plagiarism norms and academic honesty, are of primary importance (Ulrich 2017, 213). The focus here is, though, on ethical standards and the main aspects considered in the ethical scrutiny of this research have been voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, harm, exploitation and consequences for future research (Halperin and Heath 2017, 162).). This study has given particular consideration to the privacy and dignity of potential respondents, ensuring their informed consent to participate (provided in written form and accurately stored), the confidentiality of the data acquired and the correct storing of the research findings and information about the participants themselves.

Furthermore, ethics is a core theme in feminist research, either in terms of a feminist ethics of care, which calls attention to responsibility and caring relationships, or in the more abstract terms of rights, justice and virtues (Bell 2014, 80). Still, considering that the “practice of feminist research is designed to include greater emphasis on inclusivity” (Bell 2014, 78), what distinguishes a feminist comprehension of ethics is the emphasis put on the concepts of context, relationships and power (Bell 2014, 84). In fact, formal consent procedures are to be considered as only partially effective in empowering research participants to protect themselves against excessive risks of harm (Ulrich 2017, 206), thus the development of an “ethics of empathy”, even if always accompanied by ethical awareness, is necessary in order to be particularly careful about the possibility of building exploitative relationships during the collection of data (Bell 2014, 92).

3.4 Limitations of this study

First of all, the genuine possibility of generalization from case studies (which is possible primarily in terms of generalizing theories), is quite difficult (Yin 2014, 19-22). In particular, when the study is about a small number of cases, not only selection bias is always likely to be a problem (Halperin and Heath 2017, 226) but also the ability to generalize based on small-n discourse analysis is generally low (Lindekilde 2014). Consequently, “until the theory has been existed on a large number of cases, if they exist”, researchers must be very cautious about attributing broader meaning to their study (Halperin and Heath 2017, 227).

In addition, CDA, which is the core of the methodological construction of this research, has been criticized for its dependence on previous theory and has been defined as “a political theory as much as a method of inquiry” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 339). It has, thence, been contested for its a priori critical and political stance and the lack of methodological rigor in the selection of the data and their analysis, which gives too much room to researchers’ bias (Weninger 2008, 147). In fact, discourse analysis is regularly confronted with criticism for its lack of “rigor” (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 74).

Particularly significant is the critique of Widdowson who contends that the term discourse is as vague as it is fashionable: “discourse is something everybody is talking about but without knowing with any certainty just what it is: in vogue and vague” (Widdowson 1995, 158). Moreover, he contends that CDA is an ideological interpretation and therefore not an analysis; indeed, “the term critical discourse analysis is a contradiction in terms”: it is biased toward a precise ideological commitment, which defines the texts to be chosen for the analysis in so far as they support it in their interpretation (Widdowson 1995, 169 as mentioned in Meyer 2001, 17). Moreover, discourse analysis is a method of analysis which requires a lot of labour and time (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 9).

It is also necessary to consider the respondents tend to adapt their answers to what they think the interviewer or the general public expect from them, known as the “interview affect” (Halperin and Heath 2017, 290). In the case of elite interviews, furthermore, it is necessary to consider that respondents are extremely receptive to the way questions are framed (Halperin and Heath 2017, 299). For what regards specifically interviewing via video link and web camera, it is necessary to consider that they impede a natural flow of conversation (Halperin and Heath 2017, 297). In the case of structured email interviews possible issues, instead, can be connected to the fact that it can be difficult to have connection to the internet, that the questions need to be easily understandable, since there is no real opportunity for the interviewer to probe or clarify them, and that the interviewee must be motivated and interested in participating (Halperin and Heath 2017, 296).

Another important issue is associated with the snowball technique, because it can trap the researcher in a network of interlinked respondents with a very similar world view (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013, 87), moreover an overall peculiar issue of conducting interviews in institutions like the armed forces is the requirement of obtaining authorization from competent bodies, which not only demands very long procedural times, but also can strongly influence the kind of information obtained by means of the interview itself. In fact, research in military institutions is characterized by some specific features, such as the gap which exists between the civilian and the military world and the impact of the hierarchical structure of the institution in allowing access to external subjects (Carreiras, Castro and Frederic 2016, 2). Indeed, the civilian status of the researchers is a very context-specific source of otherness in the military environment, which understands itself as “other” and “unique” in relation to the civilian one (Böene 2000; Castro 2013). Thus, the armed forces can be quite diffident towards civilians, even when they are authorized researchers (Ammendola et al. 2016, 173).

For what concerns field research, it needs to be mentioned that it also presents some disadvantages such as the fact that usually these studies are quite expensive and time-consuming, but also that it is

very difficult for the researcher to distance themselves from the subject researched and finally that it is impossible to control external variables which constantly alter the nature of the research.

It is, at this point, necessary to mention also the corona virus outbreak and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted the lives of everyone around the world and specifically hindered the research. Especially difficult has been the process of data collection, primarily taking into account the impossibility of carrying out field research, especially abroad, for a very long period of time during the research itself.

3.5 A (critical feminist) human rights' perspective in researching the armed forces

As we have clearly stressed: “A critical feminist perspective uses critical inquiry and reflection on social injustice by way of gender analysis to transform, and not simply explain, the social order” (Ackerly and True 2019,1).

Particularly,

“[t]he aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities” (Lazar 2007, 142),

A feminist CDA is, hence, committed to investigate the oppression of women in its “endless variety and monotonous similarity” (Rubin as quoted in Lazar 2007, 148).

A concluding remark regards the writing and publishing of feminist research. Considering that it is explicitly “value laden” and thus a form of critique and intervention (Leavy and Harris 2019, 202), it is characterized by a blurring between subjectivity and objectivity (Charmaz 2007, 2012) as a conscious reaction to hypocritical assertions of neutrality which indeed sustain “the construction of gendered, racialized, sexed, and classed knowledge” (Leavy and Harris 2019, 203).

Moreover, some major questions remain unanswered:

- First, in view of the most spread criticism against CDA, is it possible to perform any research free of a priori value judgements and is it possible to gain insight from purely empirical data without using any pre-framed categories of experience? (Meyer 2001, 17).

- Second, bearing in mind the theoretical viewpoint of this study, “[w]hat power does the researcher have in determining whose voice will be heard in the interpretation of research findings?” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 399).
- Finally, considering the human rights paradigm which supports this whole project and the subsequent legal focus of it, does the proposed research contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights? (Ulrich 2017, 210).

All things considered, it is actually possible to summarize this chapter by looking at the feminist methodological commitments indicated by Tickner (2006, as quoted in Wibben 2010, 112): “asking feminist research questions, basing one’s research on women’s experiences, adopting a (self)-reflexive stance, and having an emancipatory agenda”, whilst remarking that this whole study moves within a human rights framework³⁹.

³⁹ Not only, as observed throughout this research, the WPS Agenda is made up of ten resolutions which are part of an international tradition of human rights, seen that they are based on and explicitly mention normative obligations from numerous major treaties, custom, and other sources of international law (Bulduk 2019), and it is explicitly directed at protecting human rights, particularly women’s human rights (and children’s human rights), but it is also a pivotal instrument for the realization and the actual enforcement of a human right to peace. Indeed, peace is a necessary prerequisite in order to enjoy all the other human rights, even the very and fundamental right to life.

4. Understanding the context: women in the military institution

Indeed, the simplistic dichotomy “war versus peace cannot capture the daunting complexities of contemporary political and social life” (Elshtain and Tobias 1990, x).

It is necessary to start with the observation that the military is an institution, which, considering also its quite sui-generis nature, can be interpreted in terms of what the sociological literature calls “total institutions”, defined by Goffman as those institutions where life becomes an all-consuming, routinized, intensely scrutinized and regulated existence (1991, 5) and the “subjects’ every movements, choices, and behaviour are governed by institutional objectives and influence, wherein the rituals of daily life occur in the company of others” (Goffman 1991, 6). Other examples of total institutions can be considered to be the prisons or monasteries, namely institutions organized in order “to control the behaviour of group members in a ‘total’ way” (Barnao 2018, 293) and consequently defined by a complete separation of the inside world from the outside. Thus, Barnao (2018, 291) warns that because of the fact that they are total institutions it is usually very difficult to access military institutions and that related research itself has been carried out from the inside or by subjects whose independence was limited.

On the other hand, like all the other institutions, the armed forces are not only rational but also social institutions, “thus the perceptions and thinking of their actors and activities are not only oriented towards organizational aims such as efficiency or profit, but towards rules, norms and values which have developed over time in the context of the institution itself, always relying on gendered dimensions” (Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 65). Thus, while the military institution is characterized by contradictions between formal organizational structure and everyday activities (Wobbe 2003 in Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 66), a paramount aspect to take into consideration when analysing the military is exactly the construction of these gendered dimensions within the institution.

Indeed, as better outlined in the next section, not only the military is a gendered institution, because of its almost exclusively male hegemony in numbers, hierarchy, distribution of power and ideology, but it is also a “gendering” or gender-granting institution which constructs dominant conceptualizations of gender (Cohn 1993; Segal 1999; Carreiras and Alexandre 2013).

4.1 I’ll make a man out of you: power and gender within the military

Reflecting on the fact that the domain of men has always been associated with the public domain, while women are relegated to the private domain, that is the home (Jung Fiala 2008, 50), it is particularly telling that the military has always played a major role in society and the public sphere and that it is a male dominated arena (Zayed AL-Oraimi 2008, 129; Obradovic 2014).

In fact, since the ideal soldier has always been depicted not only as brave and strong but also as male and since military service has always been characterized as a rite of passage in becoming a real man, military masculinities have developed into archetypes of civil masculinities (Connell 2000; Frevert 2001; Barrett 1999); thus the military has been charged with the task of institutionalizing a specific model of hegemonic masculinity and its correspondent model of femininity (Carreiras 2008, 166). Similarly, Sjoberg (2014, 3) underlying the traditional association of war-making and war-fighting not just with men, but with the traits that men are expected to have, or masculinities, claims as undeniable the link between expectations of masculinity and expectations of soldiering (Sjoberg 2014, 62). Carreiras (2006, 41), as well, points out how the military in general, and combat units in particular, have been central to the construction of the masculine gender identity and to the definition of hegemonic masculinity.

In particular, manhood is “something to achieve through the path of warrior-heroism” (Sjoberg 2014, 68), which requires to achieve the ability (and responsibility) to protect and characterizes the ideal man as “a citizen-soldier, a protector of the state and the women and children in it” (Sjoberg 2014, 70). On the other hand, though, this construction can be rather problematic, it brings as a consequence the conjunction between men and militants and consequently the invisibility of men as civilians, which can be seen as part of the larger invisibility of all the people “who do not fit into a stereotypical notion of the gender characteristics associated with their (perceived) biological sex’s part in accounts of people’s behavior in war” (Sjoberg 2014, 60).

Moreover, since victorious fighting affirms the victor’s masculinity, Sjoberg (2014, 72) argues that war fighting can be seen as an exercise in masculinization, that is the institution of social preference for masculinities over femininities in the practice of war, whereas the defeated is subjected to an inverse process of feminization, described as “the subordination or oppression of people, groups, states, or ideas by associating them with values perceived as feminine”. Through this process of feminization of their opponents, that is assuming “a masculine and dominant position relative to a feminine and subordinate enemy” (Goldstein 2001, 356), the parties to a conflict foster a logic which plays a major role in wartime sexual violence by recurring to images of the virility of the rapist and the impotence of the man whose “beautiful soul” is raped (Sjoberg 2014, 76-77). As a matter of fact, “belligerents attempt to affirm their own masculinity while emasculating, or feminizing, their enemies

[...] the logic of feminization can be seen in the intentional victimization of civilians in wars and conflicts” (Sjoberg 2014, 16). Overall, thus, it is possible to observe a general pattern of militarization⁴⁰ of gender and sexuality in relation to the military, which ranges from sexualized descriptions of both parties in armed conflicts (Ducat 2004; Goldstein 2001), mostly based on dichotomies like: our men as honourable and virile vs their men as perverted and impotent; our women as virtuous and vulnerable vs their women as promiscuous and deceitful (Feitz and Nagel 2008, 201), to the phallic discourse which permeates all “war talk” (Cohn 1993; Cooke and Wollacot 1993).

Similarly, Carreiras (2006, 41), while recognizing the function of military service as a rite of passage from childhood to manhood, stresses also its importance as “a ritual of differentiation between men and women, or better, between the socially constructed categories of masculine and feminine”. Indeed, she stresses that, while multiple subcategories or archetypes of women coexist in the symbolic universe of the military -such as women as sexual objects, and accordingly the common naming of equipment by women’s names (Arkin and Dobrofski 1978, 162), or women as a hunting trophy, particularly connected with the occurrence of rape and sexual violence (Battistelli 1999)- the basic distinction, assuming women as protected beings, is that between women as mothers and men as warriors. A relation which in the words of Carreiras (2006, 44) can be expressed as: “giving life and giving death, maternity and combat, seen as mutually exclusive activities and specific to the essential nature of women and men” and clearly based on the dependence of women on men (Stiehm 1982).

It must be recognized that, on the other hand, by deconstructing and reconstructing “identities, imaginations of selves and relations to others on an individual and collective level”, wars and conflicts have the potential to deconstruct and reconstruct gender relations and gender roles as well (Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 67). Moreover, not only “in different branch and unit contexts, men construct different components of the construct ‘masculinity’ with concomitant differences in their attitudes about women in the military” (Cohn 1999, 35), but, as further analysed in this chapter, Carreiras (2006, 45) suggests that because of structural changes bringing to a convergence between the civilian and military world, “military service has also lost most of its symbolic power in the production of gender referents” and, thus, more than being characterized by the motto “make a man out of you”, it is increasingly displaying itself as a place where to obtain professional qualification and technical skills (Carreiras 2006, 45).

⁴⁰ Militarization is “the process by which characteristically military practices are extended into the civilian arena” (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 258), or according to Enloe (2000, 3) “a step by step process by which a person or thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas”.

Summing up, thence, different scholars have long investigated how war-making⁴¹ depends on a militarization of gendered and sexual models, employed as tools in order to attract, encourage and retain soldiers, thus as necessary tools for its own survival (Hartung 2001; Nagel 1998, 2003). Moreover, academics have delved into the ubiquitous connection between war and manhood, exploited to elaborate forms of hegemonic masculinities which through time and space are connected to warrior ideals stressing values such as bravery, toughness and strength (Mosse 1996; Tosch 2004; Connell 2005).

Still, it is not only patriarchy and masculinity which support militarism⁴², but different forms of femininities as well (Feitz and Nagel 2008, 202). According to scholars such as Eisenstein (2004), when women enter into the armed forces they participate in the legitimation of militarism and can become, even unconsciously, gendered weapons of war⁴³; thus, with a criticizing tone, Enloe writes that “[t]he newest maneuver has been to camouflage women’s service to the military as women’s liberation” (2000, 45). Moreover, feminists have been accused of encouraging women’s involvement in the military without investigating gender relations in the institution and thus accepting the system previously created by men as the standard to apply also to women (Harrell 2002). According to Heineken (2019, 220), even if women’s representation in the military reaches significant numbers, they will still “contribute to the war system, which reinforces gender roles” (Goldstein 2001). Likewise, given the deep-rooted and resistant patriarchal character of the military institution (Feitz and Nagel 2008, 204; Enloe 2007), Sjoberg (2014, 41) underlines that “the standards of masculinity for soldiers in militaries do not automatically change because the soldiers expected to meet those standards live in female bodies”.

In view of these remarks, many feminists approach military institutions with concern and “they may doubt whether working within the existing institutional and cultural structures of the armed forces is sufficient or even appropriate” (Egnell and Alam 2019, 13), Otto (2009), for instance wonders if “inside” or “outside” strategies are the most productive, that is to work within existing institutions or try to achieve change from the outside. Indeed, the framework itself of the UNSCR 1325 depicts

⁴¹ At the same time, Leigh and Weber (2019, 86) show how these gendered security tropes are simultaneously racialized, indeed the Western soldier, in most Western hegemonic discourses, is understood as white.

⁴² Militarism is defined by Kronsell (2012, 29) as the belief that hierarchy, obedience and the use of force are particularly effective in a dangerous world. Cockburn (2010, 161) affirms that challenging militarism is necessary for the feminist goal of obtaining social change, since it originates and justifies unequal power relations. Moreover, gender and militarism are mutually constitutive and, thus, gendered militarism is at the basis of the military but also nationalism, state legitimacy and war waging (Eichler 2019, 163).

⁴³ Feitz and Nagel (2008, 201-225) report the examples of the staged rescue of Jessica Lynch and the sexual abuses committed in Abu Ghraib during the Iraq War in their analysis of gender politics and sexual dynamics in the US military.

military organizations in their dual and ambiguous nature: not only as the potential protectors of women and civilian but also as the very potential problem.

On the other hand, feminist scholars have denounced that female accession to the armed forces has been consistently resisted by men. According to Enloe (1983, 15), the armed forces are among the core foundations of the patriarchal system developed to suppress women, thence, in order to preserve the system itself, they have been denied access to it and especially “cannot qualify for the entrance to the inner sanctum, combat”, since it “would throw into confusion all men’s certainty about their male identity”. In particular, different reasons have been employed in order to justify the exclusion of women from the military and particularly from combat (Heinecken 2019, 210). According to Carreiras (2006, 89), these justifications can be divided into four main categories referring to women’s individual characteristics, the impact of women’s presence on cohesion and morale of military units, the cost-effectiveness and the effects on social and cultural values.

In view of the fact that the military is a peculiar institution with very specific characteristics and tasks, the “effectiveness” argument is particularly strong: predicating that the military is different from the rest of the society because of its unique mission, it argues that the role of this institution is not that of granting equal rights to all individuals, nor that of being a social laboratory (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 31). As Tuten (1982, 261) underlines, the armed forces’ primary function is “to provide for common defense-not to redress perceived social and sexual inequalities in our societies”, it is “to defend the American society, not to change it”, in fact if “we use the military as a testbed for social experimentation we risk the security of the nation”.

For what concerns biological limitations, concerns have always been related to the limits imposed by insufficient physical strength, menstruation and pregnancy (Carreiras 2006, 89), moreover differences in physical performance could become sources of perceptions of inequity or inequality among the military personnel. Some scholars underline that since “combat still remains a physically and psychologically extraordinarily strenuous experience [...] women find themselves at a biological disadvantage in terms of (1) strength and endurance; (2) injuries; and (3) deployability” (Maninger 2008, 9) and that, considering how “the top 20 per cent of women are at a physical performance level comparable to the bottom 20 per cent of the average male population” (Creveld 2001, 152f), “these forms of social engineering are considered unreasonably risky” (Maninger 2008, 10). Critically Maninger (2008, 16) concludes “[w]hile it is generally deemed irresponsible, if not criminal, to send 16 year-old boys or 60 year-old men into combat because most are unable to meet the physical

demands of the battlefield, it is widely considered enlightened and progressive to commit women to combat conditions in spite of the obvious and persistent disadvantages they face”⁴⁴.

Further, in view of the fact that “social engineering and double standards in order to attain the unattainable [...] erode unit cohesion”, Maninger (2008, 19) concludes that women “pose a threat to discipline and unit cohesion, resulting in a general lowering of standards and combat effectiveness” and overall undermine the qualities of Western armies (Hanson 2001, 325). In a similar viewpoint, Simons (2001, 90) argues that women in combat units contribute to “distraction, dissension and distrust”. For instance, some academics recur to the paternalistic reasoning that men will naturally feel required to protect the women in their units, thus being unable to focus and fulfil their military tasks (see for instance Katz 1992, 19; Karim and Henry 2018, 394) or worry about the consequences of the creation of romantic relationships among soldiers (Simons 2000). Using a quite problematic analogy, the Center for Military Readiness, a non-partisan and non-governmental organization which opposes women in combat, stated that the “deliberate exposure of women to combat violence in war is tantamount to acceptance of violence against women in general” (Scarborough 2006 in Jung Fiala 2008, 52), thus reinforcing stereotypical ideas of women as vulnerable. Moreover, considering the tragic phenomenon of sexual harassment in the military, according to the sociologist Moskos (1990, 70) female officers have a very broad understanding of sexual harassment, which actually creates “a climate conducive to the “rule of suspicion” in the chain of command” and “a convenient excuse when things go wrong” (Maninger 2008, 21).

Thus, the risk of “feminization” (Creveld 2003, 166) of the military is to be avoided. In this sense, Blair, Chairman of the Congressional Commission on Military Training and Gender-Related Issues, concluded in 1994 that: “the objective for many who advocate greater female influence in the armed services is not so much to conquer the military as to conquer manhood; they aim to make the most quintessentially of our institutions more feminine” (Gutmann 2000, 152). Uniformly, Maninger (2008, 26) underlines that: “the opening of Western militaries to women is largely based on questionable false assumptions about gender and the nature of future war” and Mitchell (1989, 340f.) points out that “[t]he problem, of course, with weighing the pluses and minuses of using women in the military is that there are too many minuses [...] the only reason to use women is not a military reason. It is a political reason driven by an ideology that is hostile to the military”.

⁴⁴ Ironically relevant in this regard seems to be the example utilized by Maninger (2008, 21) that: “Bayonets had to be removed from the US Air Force Academy drill rifles because one cadet accidentally stabbed herself in the forehead while pulling her bayonet off during a drill”.

Additionally, because of the fact that at least since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 there have been some revival of direct ground combat, there has been a parallel recovery of the never-ending debate on integrating females on the military and especially granting them access to combat positions. Quite opposite views and arguments have been, though, objected to the previous ones.

Simon (2001, 95), for example argues first and foremost why the integration of women has been depicted as the woman's problem, indeed, she contends that it is the woman's sexuality that seems to be the focus. Thus, by reinforcing the stereotype that men are "Weak when it comes to women" (Simon 2001, 95) women will continue to be seen as sexual objects and men as sexually obsessed while the talents and skills of both genders are completely overlooked (Rosen et al. 2003; Serlin 2003; Shields 2000; Titunik 2000; Krueger 2000; Rosen 1996; Donegan 1996). Herbert (1998, 16), in addition, underlines how "control of sexuality may, in fact, not be so much a result of gender differences as it is a mechanism for insuring their maintenance".

According to Carreiras and Kümmel (2008, 30), "military traditionalists" use two myths as "discursive weapons targeting gender integration in the military": the cult of the body and the cult of homogeneity, based on essentialist standpoints about the determining prevalence of biology. At the same time, though, the cult of the body is based on assumptions which do not consider that "individual characteristics tend to be distributed within each gender, in a 'bell-curve' distribution" and thus to a certain extent "male and female bell-curves overlap" (Goldstein 2001, 132-133). Moreover not only physical standards are not clear as to which capabilities should actually be tested nor are based on common tests throughout the armed forces (and there is no reason why all military members should have the same physical fitness), but women are being evaluated according to male standards, that is traits on which average men score higher than average women and not the opposite, as for instance it would be measuring flexibility (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 34-35; Krainz 2003).

Considering the cult of social homogeneity, it is important to say that it "rests upon the presumed and feared effects of women's presence on cohesion and morale in military units, such as detrimental interpersonal processes leading to sub-optimal performance and the distortion of male-bonding" (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 36), thus it is based on "the belief that effective or successful performance is the result of cohesion, and this, in turn, is a result of social homogeneity" (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 36). On the other hand, not only there is opposite research and evidence regarding the military performance of mixed units (Binkin and Bach 1977; Holm 1993; Peach 1994, 12f., Yeager 2007), arguing that cohesion is based "on commonality of experience, shared risk, and mutual experiences of hardship, not on gender distinction (Devilbiss 1985, 543), but there is little evidence of a causal relationship between cohesion and performance (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 40). Group

cohesion can even become detrimental to the performance of the whole organization if the goals of the group are divergent from the rest or the uniformity in opinions within the group brings to “strategic myopia” (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 40-41; Lorsch 1985). Similarly, Langenhuizen (2019, 97) reports that diversity enhances operations (in fact mixed teams work better than single-gender teams), guarantees a broader pool of candidates and influences positively the internal culture (Langenhuizen 2019, 96-97). Thus, MacKenzie (2015) argues that the argument of cohesion, based on what she calls the myth of the Band of Brothers, has been used with the purpose of preventing the accession of women to combat, while, as Morrison stresses, what is necessary is “to define the true meaning of teamwork to embrace a band of brothers and sisters” (Morrison 2013 in Harris Rimmer 2019, 177). At the same time, though, Segal (1982, 278) argues that “if men believe that women are not part of their group and that they cannot function with women around”, this belief will exactly become real as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We can, thus, conclude this paragraph reflecting on the fact that “gender is a crucial part of war-making and war-fighting, and war -making and war-fighting is a crucial part of understanding gender. In short, gender makes war and war makes gender” (Sjoberg 2014, 17).

4.2. Forces for good? Cosmopolitan, post-national, gender-aware militaries

As already brought to attention, it is paramount to understand that the gradual integration of women in the military has developed in a context characterized by crucial transformations in global security and thereafter in the structure and orientation of the armed forces of Western nations, especially for what regards the political understanding of the use of force and the management of violence so as the collaboration between the military and the civilian spheres (Carreiras 2006, 72; Barnao 2018).

Indeed, technological progress has strongly influenced the abandonment of the mass army, based on universal conscription and a consequent adaptation of the military towards specialization and reliance on non-military experts (Carreiras 2006, 74). Even if after the end of the Cold War a certain amount of countries underwent a progressive abolition of the draft, the distancing from conscription started already in the mid-1960s when an increase in conscientious objection was accompanied by a decrease in the legitimation of the draft (Carreiras 2006, 75). Subsequently, Haltiner (1998, 39) objected that: “the mass army, indebted to a national ideology, organizationally homogenous, but functionally little differentiated and based on physical mobilization of human masses in order to be efficient, but economically inefficient as far as the ratio between personnel, capital and technology is concerned, is out of date”. An assertion, though, which has to take into account that “especially the large and rich

countries could afford to maintain forces on the basis of volunteers” (Van Doorn 1975) and which is then less likely to affect small countries.

While Huntington (1957) supported the view that the military, in order to remain effective in organizational terms and neutral in political terms, needed to keep some separation from the rest of society, Janowitz (1960), observing societal and international trends, started talking of a “civilianization” of the military, as a step-by-step convergence of the civilian and military reality and connected ideological standpoints. Relying on the work of Janowitz, Moskos (1977) inaugurated the Institutional/Occupational (I/O) thesis, which has become a necessary reference in approaching the evolution of military organizations (Carreiras 2006, 79) and which takes into account different indicators of proximity or distance of a military organization from civilian society. At the same time, it must also be considered that military organizations are not absolutely monolithic institutions, consequently these I/O dynamics vary according to military services, internal branches and other distinctions, such as in relation to officers, non-commissioned officers and other personnel (Moskos 1986, 81).

In the last period, these changes within the military have been reinterpreted as a move from a “modern” military to a “postmodern” military. Moskos, Williams and Segal (2000) have declared that Western democratic organizations are distancing themselves from nationalism while adapting to a new world system and to the erosion of traditional forms of national sovereignty. In fact, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan manifested the ineffectiveness of conventional warfare methods, which were replaced by counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, characterized by different activities, ranging from combat to “winning the hearts and minds” of local populations through stabilization activities, and thus by the potential to bring about the integration of a gender perspective in military operations (Oppermann 2019, 120). Indeed, modern armed conflict is fought among the population, within communities themselves, and relying to an increasing extent on technological advantage, while modern militaries are not just participating in war fighting but getting more and more involved in peacekeeping and natural disaster response and relief, both domestically and internationally (Harris Rimmer 2019, 177-178). The function of the military task is under a process of reform which already started during the Cold War, when the military institution adopted the logic of deterrence, in relation to the threat of nuclear weapons, as its core organizing principle (Reynaud 1988, 27), making consequently the use of military force solely a last resort option (Carreiras 2006, 74). Since the end of bipolarism in the global order, finally, military priorities have increasingly moved away from national territorial defence to move closer to support peace and stability in multinational interventions (Dandeker 1998, 84). According to Kings (2019, 145-146) the professionalization of Western armed

forces is crucial in the process of women's integration, in fact having improved the combat effectiveness of the military, it has also changed the culture and conception of cohesiveness in the military. In fact, while the mass citizen armies of the twentieth century was assumed to depend on cohesiveness related to racial, ethnic, sexual and gender homogeneity, nowadays it is understood to be connected to professionalism, training and members' effectiveness at their job (King 2019, 145-146). This shift allows, thus, for a potential de-association of soldiering and manhood and a corresponding association of it with the acquisition of professional expertise (King 2019, 147).

The other fundamental milestone on the global scenario, considering that gender analysis is crucial to understanding wars and conflicts (Sjoberg 2014, 4), indeed women experience conflicts differently than men (see Kuloglu 2008, 227-237), has been the development of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, a framework where military organizations have a central, but still quite contradictory and puzzling, role. On the one hand, they are considered the "problem" because they perpetrate violence (including against women and civilians) and preserve the patriarchal war system, on the other hand they are charged with protecting women and civilians in conflict (Egnell and Alam 2019, 10). Moreover, as Egnell and Alam (2019, 253-254) argue, while some feminist scholars see military institutions as "the very materialization of the patriarchal order in which power relations are determined and negotiated through violence, as well as the final bastions of male exclusivity and hypermasculine organizational cultures", others acknowledge that in some circumstances the rule of law and international security cannot but depend on coercive measure and thus "violence is sometimes necessary to protect society and liberal values". Thus, the military, while "inherently problematic" can also become part of "the solution" (Egnell and Alam 2019, 254). In fact, this agenda requires military organizations to engage both internally and externally, to approach civil society and local leaders so as to ensure women's full participation, and to actively protect women and girls, thus committing to a deeper understanding of gender perspectives. A special focus is given to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, where it can even be argued that "in the midst of conflict often only the military has the muscle to provide a convincing enough threat to change individual or group behavior" (Egnell and Alam 2019, 11).

As observed so far, thence, the contemporary context is mostly characterized by different forms of small wars, counterinsurgency, low-intensity conflict and complex stability and peace support operations, where militaries are required to support operations involving many different actors and aimed at reaching political goals comprehending stabilization, democratization, development and

protection of human rights and the rule of law⁴⁵. Thence, militaries themselves, as instruments towards these goals, are required “not to violate the principles that tend to govern the larger endeavor: respect for human rights, ideals of democratic governance, and gender equality” (Egnell and Alam 2019, 7).

In conclusion, there are at least three main reasons for the progressive integration of women and application of gender perspectives in the armed forces: first, societal changes pushing for gender equality; second, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and its increasing implementation in different countries; third, the shift towards new typologies of military operations which highlight how operational effectiveness cannot be reached without analysing the roles played by women in society and their experiences (Egnell and Alam 2019, 254). Still, the starting points of the whole process have been the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW and the UNSCR 1325, that is societal imperatives (the ideology and culture of the society) rather than functional imperatives (the professional needs related to the nature of warfare; Huntington 1957), consequently external factors rather than internal ones (Egnell and Alam 2019, 256).

The armed forces are, in fact, Janus-faced organizations which, while entrusted with the primary task of assuring military effectiveness, are also required to be receptive of the values of the society they are part of and which ultimately supports them (Dandeker 1998; Ammendola 1999). Thus, on the one hand, this inherently contradictory institution, is explicitly represented by the utter primacy of the effectiveness argument on which it is built. Indeed, considering the relationship between the WPS Agenda and gender mainstreaming, particularly how the ultimate goal of mainstreaming is often described as achieving gender equality, Egnell and Alam point out that this objective “is somewhat problematic for military organizations that have other core tasks and that may not see gender equality part of what they are responsible for, indeed, they emphasize the need to be different from other societal structures in order to ensure effectiveness in their core tasks” (Egnell and Alam 2019, 11). On the other hand, not only to utilize a gender perspective can have a positive potential exactly in terms of operational effectiveness but also as an important signal to the broader society (Egnell and Alam 2019, 12), to which the armed forces cannot but be bound as emphasized by the concept of democratic control of the armed forces.

⁴⁵ It is necessary to consider that, at the same time, the use of police in international settings has increased substantially since the 1990s (Greener 2019).

Looking at the case of the Australian armed forces, but with a much broader reach, Harris Rimmer (2019, 179-180)⁴⁶ underlines that

the Australian military carries a special constitutional role and receives many exemptions from the legal responsibilities of ordinary citizens. These exemptions are necessary for the ADF to perform its constitutional function to protect the state; the state allows the military to bear arms on the state's behalf and rewards the soldier for being willing, if necessary, to die in defense of the national interest. The Australian military thus exists in a state of exceptionalism in relation to "ordinary" law but is still bound through the constitution by the rule of law and civilian control (Harris Rimmer 2019, 179-180).

4.3 Women in the military

When approaching women in the armed forces, some scholars resort to a perspective based on rights and equality, while others use an instrumentalist one, based on strategy and utility. In particular, the "effectiveness argument" thus, stresses the unique nature of the military, which is not there "to grant equal rights to all individuals and the institution should not be transformed into a laboratory for social experimentation", while "the civil rights argument, on the contrary, underlines the way in which the military in a democratic polity is (or should be) a reflection of the society it is supposed to protect, including the defense of its core values such as citizenship and equality" (Carreiras 2006, 87). In the end, though, both these discourses, rather than being in opposition one to the other need to complement each other, it is necessary to observe how at a less theoretical and more practical level, different models have been proposed to concretely study women in the military.

Moreover, in order to better understand women's military participation, especially important is the research conducted by Kanter (1977) on tokenism, in fact she argued that the very few women represented in the corporation she was studying became tokens, representing their whole category rather than their own individuality, "symbols of how-women-can-do, stand-ins for all women" (Kanter 1993, 207). Hence, she concluded that in groups where there is a small number of women compared to men, the former are treated as tokens, that is something special, producing antagonistic reactions, for instance they tend to be singled out or put under protection, "on the basis of benevolent, but uninvited and unwanted help" (Moelker and Bosch 2008, 112). The token situation, according to

⁴⁶ See also Katz (1992, 3) : "Any discussion of the legal status of military women requires a preliminary understanding that the military operates in a legal world of its own, in which many of the accepted rules and concepts of civilian law simply do not apply".

her research, happens to members of a subgroup which constitutes 15% or less of the whole and brings to performance pressures, related to high visibility, social isolation, as a consequence of the exaggeration of differences by the dominant group (contrast), and finally role encapsulation, as an effect of gender stereotyping (assimilation) (Carreiras 2008, 162). At the same time, though, while “the token does not have to work hard to have her presence noticed [...], she does have to work hard to have her achievements noticed” (Kanter 1993, 216). Women can, thence, react in many different ways to the token situation, from trying to become socially invisible, to trying to become insiders by portraying themselves as exceptions and rejecting their own social category, to adjusting to previously defined stereotypical roles (Carreiras 2008, 162-163). Considering that tokens’ responses to role encapsulation tend to be conservative, by recurring to low-risk strategies usually made up of attempts to adjust to previously defined stereotypical roles, in the absence of external pressures, tokenism can become a self-perpetuating system (Carreiras 2006, 36). Thus, female soldiers tend to adjust themselves to “the system-justifying ideologies of dominant groups in a manner that perpetuates their own oppression” (Kümmel 2008, 195), in particular when benevolent sexism is seen as being advantageous for them as well (Viki 2003; Jost and Banaji 1994).

On the other hand, even if the logic of numerical representation is fundamental in the integration of women in the military, the conclusions of Kanter have been criticized for the “supposedly structuralist determinism” of her approach (Carreiras 2006, 37), that is the assumption that the condition of women will automatically improve with their numerical increase in the organization (Bird 1996). As a matter of fact, gender integration in the military depends on many societal processes and not by a single major factor (Carreiras and Fragoso 2019).

4.3.1 Why women? From the concept of gender to the focus on women

Reinharz (1992, 248) underlines that feminist research is aimed at “making the invisible visible, bringing women’s lives to the center”. Indeed, when looking at war, “[f]eminist-informed gender analysis is not a luxury; it is a necessity” (Enloe 2010, 8) because “[w]ar histories [...] are not only related to gender histories, they are gender histories”⁴⁷ (Sjoberg 2014, 138). Accordingly, feminist researchers have long suggested that dominant stories of war and conflict contain gendered silences (Gibson Graham 1994, 216), and suggested that those silences are actually “positive rules” because “all systems of knowledge depend on deeming certain issues irrelevant” (Charlesworth 1999, 381). Thus, to look at gender, not only but also, in war stories, and at women in particular, it is necessary

⁴⁷ But also: “Perhaps less obviously, gender histories also are war histories” (Sjoberg 2014, 138).

considering that when women do appear in war stories they do appear always in rather stereotyped roles.

Enloe (1991), for instance, highlighted how war stories conflate women and children as “womenandchildren”, representing them as the quintessential category of the helpless and non-violent outsiders in war (Sjoberg 2014, 26). This lack of critical approach brings to the ideal-typical description of men and women in war as “just warriors” and “beautiful souls” (Elshtain 1987), where “male just warriors have the duty to protect women and to defend righteous cases, while female beautiful souls are at once the justification for defense (because they need protection) and by definition outside of the fighting themselves” (Sjoberg 2014, 28)⁴⁸. This restricted account of women as victims and instruments of peace and war (De Keyser 2006, 14) can be connected to the fact that “much of the scholarly work on war and conflict does not talk about women-much less gender-at all” (Sjoberg 2014, 3). On the contrary, women do play different roles in wars.

Thus, considering how “many of the roles that women have in wars are invisible or minimized in traditional war stories” and that “even when women play the same roles in war as men, they are often understood differently and treated differently” (Sjoberg 2014, 31), this research follows the setting and configuration of the WPS Agenda focusing explicitly on women. In fact, asking the question “where are the women?” is paramount in order to arrive at an understanding of war “more firmly grounded in political reality” (Enloe 1993, 20, 105)⁴⁹.

Feminist research has focused on the fact that when masculinity is the assumed norm, gender itself becomes difficult to see: Acker (1990, 139) points out that, because organizations are usually studied as gender-neutral eventually “only the masculine is present” as “men in organizations take their behavior and perspective to represent the human” (1990, 139). Consequently, this research has intentionally chosen “to focus on the women and femininities often omitted from those war stories, rather than the men and masculinities assumed to be their norm” (Sjoberg 2014, 56). At the same time, in order to be fully committed to understand women’s experiences it is necessary to go beyond the binary approach of men versus women to reach an intersectional perspective, which looks at different orders of inequality⁵⁰ (Herzog 2019, 162).

⁴⁸ Indeed, Elshtain (1995, 4) affirms that these tropes “function to re-create and secure women’s location as noncombatants and men’s as warriors”.

⁴⁹ While being aware that gender does not conflate with women (see Sjoberg 2014, 3). Similarly see Oppermann (2019, 135).

⁵⁰ Indeed, while the term intersectionality was first introduced by Crenshaw (1989), in her analysis on the oppression of women of colour, it is now utilized to include different attributes of social identity, such as class, ability, nationality, religion etc. As explained by hooks (2000, xi), the emergence of intersectionality “challenged the notion that ‘gender’ was the primary factor determining a woman’s fate”.

It is, at this point, necessary to define what is meant by the concept of sex and the concept of gender. According to Sjoberg (2014, 5), “sex is biological maleness or femaleness, and gender is the social traits that we (often inaccurately) associate with these”⁵¹. Similarly, Harris Rimmer (2019, 175) affirms that “gender refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female” and Laak (2003, 13) defines gender as the cultural and social meaning that is related to one’s sex. Consequently, Jung Fiala (2009, 50) explains that “Gender roles are socially proscribed expectations of behavior associated with one’s sex, they are learned in the process of socialization and thus seem ‘natural’ to us”. Thence, when people assume that men are masculine and women are feminine, they are referring to genders, moreover while there is not just one masculinity or one femininity, but they depend on variables such as time, location, culture, race, class and sexuality dynamics, throughout history, most societies have preferred “traits associated with an ideal-typical, or hegemonic, masculinity over traits associated with femininities and/or other masculinities” (Sjoberg 2014, 6). Thus, as many feminist academics have suggested, gender does not only differentiate people but also establishes power relation between them (Sjoberg 2014, 7). In particular, while the dynamic of favouring traits associated with one sex over the other is defined as sexism, also called gender inequality, gender discrimination or gender subordination, the concepts of homophobia and transphobia make reference to the fear for or mistreatment of people based on assumed homosexuality or transgender identity, and are in turn related to heterosexism, as the preference for the heterosexual over the non-heterosexual, and cissexism, as the preference for those whose gender identity matches the biological sex assigned at birth (Sjoberg 2014, 7)⁵².

Thence, gender is intersubjective and socially constructed (Peterson and Runyan 2010), being based on “relationships between sex and personality traits which are not fundamental, natural, or even necessarily accurate” (Sjoberg 2014, 8).

Summing up, gender has been described by feminist scholars as “first fundamentally social; second, an expression of power; and third, an organizing principle” in war and, more generally, politics (Sjoberg 2013, 47); a notion which needs to be studied empirically (namely as it concretely exists in global politics) and criticized in its normative impact (given that it creates gender subordination) (Tickner 1997).

⁵¹ Moreover, the scholar suggests that there are not just two biological sexes and that biological sex is not clearly identifiable at birth and unchangeable. Indeed, she recalls the example of “intersex” and “trans” people (Sjoberg 2014, 5).

⁵² Indeed, Sjoberg (2014, 88-89) argues that bodies which transgress the boundaries of “coherence and continuity” among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire (Butler 1990, 23) are not acceptable but deviant, inappropriate and threatening.

The specific task of emphasizing gender, and women, issues has been called “gender analysis” by some feminist scholars (Sjoberg 2014; Blanchard 2003; Youngs 2004), “gender lenses” (Peterson and Runyan 1992, 1999, 2010; Steans 2006), or “integration of gender perspectives” as “the recognition, acknowledgment, and corresponding assessment of how structures, policies, mission mandates, and institutional culture affect men and women differently [...] both within military organizations and in the field of operations” (Egnell and Alam 2019, 2). In fact, “to look at the world through gender/feminist lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation” (Steans 2006, 30 in Sjoberg 2014, 136).

Particularly, Scott (1986) classified gender in terms of a social relation of power (thus as an organizing principle of social life) and in terms of an analytical category. In the former understanding, it works at different connected levels, shaping individual and group identities but also normative/ideological, institutional and symbolic constructions; in the latter understanding it gives the opportunity to go beyond the individual woman. Moreover, even if it cannot but be a primary analytical tool in feminist studies, it can be understood only in relations to other power relations, such as race, sexuality etc, and to be contextualized in a specific time and space. A focus which is of primary importance also to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989) concept of intersectionality⁵³.

Considering their association with masculinities and/or femininities, not only people but also groups and political organizations can be gendered (Peterson 1992)⁵⁴, hereby, it is fundamental to acknowledge that organizations are not gender neutral and that positions and jobs imply which kind of worker is supposed to fill them (Acker 1991). Organizations are inherently or essentially gendered, in the sense that they have been “defined, conceptualized and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity” (Britton 2000, 419). Accordingly, the military has a particularly clear gender regime since it is organized along precise gender divisions, looking both at opportunity and power within the institution (hierarchical divisions) and at its occupational structure (sexual division of labour concerning the exclusion, usually of women, from specific functions and ranks). In fact, the military is male dominated in terms of numeric representation, especially in relation to its core functions, which also bring more chances of promotion to higher hierarchical ranks. Finally, as observed at the beginning of this chapter, this institution is not only gendered but has historically

⁵³ Some scholars have criticized “intersectionality” for having turned into a depoliticized, whitened, neoliberalized academic concept, no more characterized by the radical social critique of the initial feminist activism (Ferree 2011; Tomlinson 2013).

⁵⁴ In particular masculinity has been studied in its construction of state identity (see McClintock 1993; Hooper 2001), military practices (Belkin 2012; Brown 2012); and even peacekeeping (Bevan and MacKenzie 2012).

defined specific normative conceptions of gender, thus being also a gendering, gender-granting or gender-defining institution (Cohn 1993; Segal 1999).

4.3.2 Women's leadership and participation in the military

Considering the core concepts of women's leadership and participation in peace and security, as introduced by UNSCR 1325, which gave birth to the WPS Agenda, it is necessary to reflect on the related concepts of gender mainstreaming and gender balancing, as two different ways to adopt a gender approach.

The concept of gender mainstreaming became part of policymaking and policy scholarship after its introduction at the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000), while it already emerged in international development circles in the 1970s (Florea Hudson and Huber 2019, 374) and can be described as:

a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities—policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects (UN Women undated d).

Moreover, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2000, 6) defines gender mainstreaming as “the process of assessing the implications for men and for women of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels” and “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”. Thus, it engages both men and women in order to change the overall culture (Karim 2019a, 29). On the other hand, the concept of gender balancing refers to “the degree to which men and women hold the full range of positions in a society or organization” (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations 2000, 6) and is often the entry point for institutions, and potentially for gender practices themselves: indeed, these policies, most of which are rather ‘sex-balancing’ reforms that do not necessarily ensure that gender roles or identities have shifted in significant ways, can increase women's access to the security sector and challenge gender dichotomies and stereotypes (Florea Hudson and Huber 2019, 375). Indeed, while

gender balancing has been object of many criticisms, related to its essentialist and instrumentalist justifications or minimalist impact, even if gender balancing does not necessarily increase gender equality, gender mainstreaming and gender reform rarely occur without gender balancing (Florea Hudson and Huber 2019, 378).

Both these methods are employed not only by the UN, and other multilateral organizations, but, and subsequently, by the armed forces worldwide dealing with the integration of women within their ranks and the needs to increase their numbers. While usually it is assumed that gender balancing, focusing on increasing female recruitment, is easier to implement than gender mainstreaming (Egnell 2019, 13), different organizations and armed forces use different strategies.

Further, different armed forces have placed their approach to women in the framework of “diversity policies”, indeed according to Richardson (2003) while emancipation is directed at reaching equal treatment and equal opportunities, but it does not transform the culture, the managing diversities approach centres on spreading knowledge about cultural backgrounds and increasing cultural empathy, in order to reach integration (Richardson 2003). Thus, Moelker and Bosch (2008, 110), considering that diversity “may break undesirable form of male bonding, macho behavior and what comes of it”, affirm that a “higher percentage of women is desirable”. Yet, Jeffries (2007) affirms that the vulnerability of women in the military’s unequal gender power structure has not been considered enough by feminists asking for equal opportunities for servicewomen, indeed another serious and widespread obstacle to the integration of women in the military is that of sexual harassment.

Further, when looking at the integration of women in the military it is paramount to consider the challenging conciliation between paid work and family life, indeed in a family where the mother works she is the one who usually devotes most of her time to the family as well (Carreiras 2006, 56), she has “the proverbial “double burden” of household work added to paid work, while men seem to make little adjustment of their working time to take up domestic tasks” (Crouch 1999, 215-218). Moreover, this situation is exacerbated by the fact that both the military and the family can be defined as “greedy institutions” (Coser 1974), since both “depend strongly on the commitment of members and impose on them great demands in terms of loyalty, time, and energy, when compared to other institutions” (Carreiras 2006, 57). At the same time, women’s leadership and participation within the armed forces is constantly marked by “the structural ambiguity” (Carreiras 2006, 48) of women’s position within the military which results in the basic dilemma if it is possible to be simultaneously a woman and a soldier without deviating from both the notions (Herbert 1998, 10). In fact, if “women are “soldiering,” then they are treated as an unnatural disruption, an anomaly” (Obradovic 2014), a

fact which explains the tendency for the disarmament of women in most societies (Carreiras 2006, 7). Indeed, seen the unquestionable association of war with highly valued masculine traits, the image of women warriors has always been quite disturbing in its potential to break the dominant gender order (Macdonald et al. 1987; Gherardi 1994)⁵⁵. Moreover, scholarship on gender and leadership has portrayed the ideal-typical leader as “male in appearance and gender, and masculine in character traits”, especially during wars (Sjoberg 2009, 153; Tickner 1992).

On the other hand, not only feminist research is committed to “a distinctive methodological perspective that fundamentally challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all of the disciplines” (Tickner 2005, 3), but, considering that “the personal is international [...and] the international is personal” (Enloe 1990, 196), feminists have contended that it is as much important to look at the individuals who do not hold power positions and are outside of the spotlights in global politics, in order to understand the dynamics of wars (Sjoberg 2014, 113).

4.3.2.1 Looking back: giving women a history

In order to fully understand women’s engagement in the military it is first of all necessary to give them a history, a quite difficult assignment considering that, according to Hartsock (1985), women were excluded from the historical process and thus have no history. In fact, their participation in the public sphere, and in the military, when possible, has usually been ignored, omitted or neglected (Zayed AL-Oraimi 2008, 140). Thus, Sjoberg (2014, 149) reflects on the fact that: “one of the most frustrating aspects of looking for gender/war histories is the amount of information that is both unavailable (not ready for consumption) and undiscoverable (undocumented or otherwise lost)”. Notwithstanding the fact that throughout time and space women have got involved in the military, still in the limited roles they managed to carve out for themselves (Zayed AL-Oraimi 2008, 140), overall, since their involvement has never really been displayed, their historical participation is strongly underestimated (Simon 2001). Furthermore, even the available historical accounts remain generously untold, given that they do not match with the roles that women are expected to perform (Jung Fiala 2008, 55).

According to various research “women are enmeshed in the military and its activities in a huge variety of ways” (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 29), as camp followers, revolutionaries, spies, soldiers in

⁵⁵ This image thus implicitly or even explicitly suggests which is the proper role for women, that is non-warriors, and establishing the social limits of war it guarantees the possibility of postwar normalization (Carreiras 2006, 6).

disguise⁵⁶ or as regular female soldiers and as supreme commanders (Wheelwright 1989; Jones 1997; Seidler 1998; Blythe 2001; DeGroot 2001; Moelker and Bosch 2008) but also as hostages, trophies, victims, prostitutes (Enloe 1989; Pollock Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1993; Stiglmayer 1994; Hicks 1994; Allen 1996; Skjelsbaek 2001). Indeed, according to Hacker (1981, 644) at least from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, “women in armies were not only normal, they were vital. Armies could not have functioned at all without the service of women” subsequently, with the professionalization and bureaucratization of armies they also became more exclusively male (Hacker 1981, 666). Thus, women started disappearing from historical accounts of military enterprises,

“like the women healers who had vanished from the history of medicine or who were recalled only as witches, the female camp followers of early armies vanished from military history or were recalled only as whores. And just as the loss of the history of women healers made the rise of professional nursing and of limited places for women doctors in the nineteenth century seem novel, so the loss of army women made the rise of military nursing and the opening of restricted careers for uniformed women’s auxiliaries appear as something new” (Hacker 191, 671).

There is, as well, wide historical evidence of women effectively being utilized in combat during revolutionary settings, when “it may become very difficult to maintain the traditional social order, and boundaries, such as those of gender, may well break down” (Macdonald 1987, 9). While, though, some scholars see these changes as irrevocable and fundamental (Chafe 1972), others see them as illusory and “only for the duration” of the conflicts (Milkman 1986; Higonnet and Higonnet 1987; Campbell 1985; Rupp 1978). As observed also before, it is the understanding of those women who joined the military which was modified, not the broader understanding of concepts such as women, war and masculinity (Macdonald 1987). Most of the times, women’s roles remained limited to non-combat work, such as nursing and administration (Harrell 2002), considered as gender-appropriate, thus feminist academics argue that societal and military gender orders need to change first (Zayed AL-Oraimi 2008, 141). Nonetheless, Carreiras (2006, 11) emphasizes that from the moment women were allowed to be part of the military with full status, “the historical pattern has been dramatically challenged” (Carreiras 2006, 11), a process which has been depicted as a threat to the military (Michell 1998; Creveld 2001), but also as a revolution (Holm 1993) and even as a deeper transformation than the introduction of nuclear weapons (Carroll and Hall 1993, 19). Indeed, according to Oppermann (2019, 115) “History has repeatedly shown that including women in military

⁵⁶ It is estimated that 400-1000 women in disguise fought during the American Civil War (Obradovic 2014).

operations directly contributes to successful outcomes. Similarly, incorporating a gender perspective improves situational understanding leading to the design and execution of appropriate and effective strategies, operations, and tactics”.

4.3.2.2 Looking around: some examples within and outside NATO

Gradually women have increased their presence in the military reaching even combat positions in different countries⁵⁷, a development which goes in the direction of challenging the common comprehension of the armed forces as male and the subsequent male-warrior association (Dunivin 1994; Carreiras and Kümmel 2008), so that some scholars talk of a “normalization” of female participation in the military, due to military necessity and women’s emancipation (Carreiras and Kümmel 2008, 29). Egnell and Alam (2019, 4) underline how “many of the developments made to date – especially with respect to the opening up of militaries to women- happened before the adoption of UNSCR 1325 [...and] were the result of broader societal changes that increased gender equality and women’s rights”.

Looking at NATO, it must be reported that already at the turning of the 21st century, despite strong differences in integration policies, all the member countries had accepted women in their armed forces, and the numbers of women consistently increased (Carreiras 2008, 161). Since then, all NATO member states, apart from Iceland which does not have a standing army, have adopted laws to permanently integrate women into the military (Obradovic 2014). Still there are many occupational restrictions, women are little represented in higher hierarchical posts and power positions within the military and even when formal/legal integration has been reached, this does not imply effective social integration (Winslow and Dunn 2002). Further, women’s military participation has always been characterized by cycles of expansion and contraction (Segal 1999).

Looking overall at the NATO countries, it is possible to evaluate the effort done by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in implementing a gender perspective as quite considerable (Isaksson 2019, 225), still the percentage of female personnel and staff in the armed forces of NATO was 11.3 percent in 2018 (NATO 2018b) and most women in the national militaries of NATO countries were confined to lower ranks, supportive roles and positions of non-commissioned officers. This situation is commonly explained in terms of the period of time which is necessary for women to integrate and reach higher military ranks, according to Isaksson (2019, 230-231), though, a serious barrier to retaining women in the military is the presence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which

⁵⁷ It is estimated that women constituted around 30% of the fighters in the recent civil war in Sierra Leone (MacKenzie 2009).

does not only affect conflict or post-conflict environments but all NATO member states and partner nations. On the other hand, though, the ubiquitous “boys will be boys” mindset within military institutions, including PKOs, is finally changing: countries like the USA, Canada and also Australia, after a long series of scandals, are strongly pressured to solve rooted problems of sexual harassment, assault, abuse, discrimination and sexualized treatment of personnel (Isaksson 2019, 233). In her analysis of NATO countries, Carreiras (2006, 121) concluded that “time, by and in itself, does not automatically foster gender integration and especially does not have the relevant impact on representation that some would expect”, it is, rather, women’s qualified presence in the social and political sphere to have a significant impact on gender integration in the military (Carreiras 2006, 127). Moreover, Von Hlatky (2019b, 372-373), while pointing out the commitment of NATO to the WPS framework, identified some difficulties in providing guidelines for gender mainstreaming as related to the complex structure of the organization, structured in civilian and military institutions, and the recent shift to a more traditional understanding of security (in view of increased threats from Russia), which is linked to a current insufficient research and policy analysis about gender and deterrence⁵⁸.

Looking in particular at the Scandinavian context, it is paramount to consider the concept of State feminism, which denotes the emergence of feminist or pro-feminist practices within the institutions of the state, a concept coined by Hernes (1987), which “emphasizes the dynamic relationships between governmental policies and agents (feminism from above) and the mobilization of women in political and cultural activities (feminism from below)” (Herzog 2019, 161). According to Herzog (2019, 159), in fact, feminist engagement with the state developed through three main steps, which coexist: the first relies on the idea of “adding women in”, thus increasing the presence of women in institutional bodies, and it is mostly a bottom-up approach. The second is about “extending the boundaries”, by addressing directly the system of policymaking, consequently a top-down strategy. The third is a “re-conceptualizing of core concepts” based on gender mainstreaming (Herzog 2019, 159). Very peculiar in this context it is the example of Norway which is the only country, together with Sweden, to have a gender-neutral conscription system (Persson and Sundevall 2019, 2)⁵⁹. Since

⁵⁸ Particularly interesting in relation to the NATO framework, and recurrently mentioned during the interviews, is the development of FETs by the US armed forces. The employment of FETs (Female Engagement Teams) by the US military in Afghanistan, whose precursor was the Lioness Program launched in Iraq in 2003 by the marine corps (Oppermann 2019, 120), tasked with gathering useful intelligence, has been interpreted as a strategy to “use women’s femininity as a weapon” by exploiting stereotypes about women for strategic purposes (Sjoberg 2014, 42).

⁵⁹ Similarly, particularly interesting is also the case of Israel, given that it is the only country which required both men and women to participate in the military service since its establishment in 1948 (Herzog 2019, 153), even if not on equal terms. In fact, the military has had in Israel, which is a relatively young country made up of immigrants, the function of uniting the Jewish community, still a gender regime, strongly differentiating between men and women, has always been “deeply intertwined in the organizational structure of the army, its methods of operation, and its organizational identity” (Herzog 2019, 153-154). Indeed, even if since the 1990s there was a progression towards a de-gendering of the military

the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905, Norwegian women participated in the Norwegian Armed Forces (NorAF) and, given the positive engagement during the Second World War, Norwegian military leaders became promoters of women in the armed forces, especially in non-combat positions (Steder and Rones 2019), which permitted also to have more men available for combat (Steder et al., 2015). In 1985, the Norwegian Armed Forces, were among the first NATO countries to open up all military positions to both men and women (Steder et al., 2015). Still, a major issue regarded equal terms of conscription for men and women, indeed, while NorAF had more or less resorted to military conscription for men since 1814, after the end of the cold war the number of male conscripts gradually decreased, reaching the lowest level in 2002, a phenomenon which made more urgent a discussion of equal treatment in regard to military service. Nonetheless, the participation of women, overall 11.6% in the armed forces (NATO 2017), is low or absent in combat units (Steder and Rones 2019, 54), and the overarching culture is one where it is necessary to become “one of the boys” to integrate (Harsvik 2010)⁶⁰. At the same time, Ellingsen, Lilleaas and Kimmel (2016, 116) argue that some specific characteristics of the NorAF, such as the use of mixed rooms, can potentially be implemented only in the peculiar Scandinavia context, indeed they talk of “gender multi-competent” young women and men raised in a Nordic culture where gender equality has always been on the political agenda and they warn against their employment in societies with lower levels of gender equality where they could put women at greater risk, thus emphasizing the specificity of the Scandinavian setting.

Interestingly, for what concern the South of Europe, countries such as Spain and Portugal, notwithstanding having started late to recruit women in the armed forces, already in 2000 showed a good level of gender integration (Carreiras 2006, 120). Portugal already recruited female personnel in 1961, even if with an exceptional status, during the war in Portugal’s overseas territories in Africa, although stopping the practice at the end of the war. All at once, in 1988 two young women were accepted in the Air Force Academy, an event which brought the armed forces to gradually open to women by means of an approach which can be called “ex-post pragmatism”, in fact at the beginning of the 1990s the official policy documents outlining the new semi-professional context of the Portuguese armed forces did not make any reference to the recruitment of women, which, thus, was

and a stronger integration of women in the different units, this progress has been faced by a counter motion towards a stronger presence of religious elements in the armed forces (Herzog 2019, 165), which has brought to the necessity of conciliating women’s integration with the requests of religious soldiers, what has been defined in terms of an “appropriate integration”, namely also “a mechanism for re-gendering” the armed forces themselves (Herzog 2019, 166).

⁶⁰ In a study of a Norwegian Special Forces battalion, for instance, Totland (2009) found out that the culture of the specific group was built upon distinguishing the archetypal male from what is considered feminine, by means of ridiculing every expression of the latter and engaging in activities not usually performed with women around.

based on “ad hoc” and even an “ex-post” decisions that helped to rapidly adapt to the situation (Carreiras 2006, 149-150).

4.3.2.3 Looking forward: which direction?

Considering that, as observed in the previous section, in every military there are problems of recruitment and retention (combined with an underrepresentation of women in higher ranks and an over representation in short-term contracts and lower ranks; Moelker and Bosch 2008, 95), the common presumption that the armed forces will by default transform their culture because of the presence of more women (Moelker and Bosch 2008, 97), seems not to be correct.

As Carreiras (2004, 318-325) asserts, in fact, institutional policies to integrate women can be understood as sources of inequity, therefore, while necessary, gender integration in the military requires greater women’s controlling presence in society, based on a different configuration of gender relations and distribution of domestic and paid work between the sexes. Similarly, Feitz and Nagel (2008, 218) point out that even if the number of women in the military grows and they achieve higher positions, considered the masculinist culture of the military institution “they remain vulnerable to sexual exploitation and scapegoating and their ability to control the definition of the situation and their role in it is limited”. With a more optimistic tone, Kuloglu (2008, 237) concludes that she believes that “if the number of women in the armed forces reaches a ‘critical mass’, i.e., a percentage high enough to result in influential positions in the decision-making process, the structure of the military can be changed”⁶¹, on the other hand she also admits that if “the women within the armed forces are gender-blind and merely reproduce the patriarchal norms of the society, nothing will be different for women in and after conflict”. Likewise, Egnell and Alam (2019, 260) underline that: “simply adding women, without serious efforts to change the culture and the legal framework of the organization, may not only limit the results of women’s participation. It may even have negative effects for the women involved”. Moreover, they also consider that not only the WPS Agenda has been developed too little time ago to have had a concrete impact on organizational culture and on the target audiences for recruitment, but also the existence of a “critical mass” of women is necessary for it to substantially impact an organization which has quite of a conflicting relationship with women (Egnell and Alam 2019, 261-262).

As already mentioned, feminists have had a conflicting relationship with the military. Yet, notwithstanding the validity of arguments criticizing the military system, Decew (1995, 58) reminds

⁶¹ Obradovic (2014) explains how the concept of critical mass has been taken from sociology, which imported it from nuclear physics, to address the idea of a quantity able to activate a chain reaction.

us that first even in a peaceful and demilitarized world the military can be exactly the necessary institution to deal with peacekeeping efforts, second, facing the reality of this nonideal world, the military is necessary to prevent atrocities and violations of human rights.

As commented so far, an effective military organization needs to answer successfully to the demands of the political leadership, thence, considering that the main function of the military is shifting from warfare to operations other than war (OOTW) such as peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions, “as the military changes in adaptation to its likely role in the twenty-first century, forces for tradition are resisting changes that they have defined as ‘feminization’ of the military” (Segal 1999, 576). Thence, according to Egnell and Alam (2019, 12-13) it is necessary to be realistic and to start a conversation about gender integration in the armed forces bearing in mind that they are “deeply sceptical organizations resistant to change”, which could foster an informed debate on peace and security, free of essentialist deceptions.

5. Understanding the context: women in peace and security processes

“Few activities raise as many moral questions as the activity of war. [...] Those people who engage in warfare transgress some of our most fundamental moral convictions about the wrongness of taking life and inflicting harm. And yet, those who perpetrate these transgressions- the soldiers and their political leaders- are often praised as heroes” (Frowe 2016, 1).

Considering that the arena of international security has traditionally been conceived, by both those on the inside and outside, as the purview of men (Egnell and Alam 2019, 1), it is fundamental not only to understand what is meant by concepts such as those of peace and security processes but also what these concepts mean in a gender perspective. Indeed, in 2000 the UNSCR 1325 finally acknowledged how women are at the core of the construction of a safe and stable world.

Indeed, feminist research has defined the global political arena as a “patriarchal structure of privilege and control” (Enloe 1993, 73), a patriarchal structure which according to Sjoberg (2014, 96) can be seen both in the definition of a state identity and in the relative positions and political interactions among them. Bearing in mind Young’s (2003) understanding of state identities as anchored in masculinist protection, Sjoberg (2014, 97-101) asserts that states compete with each other by comparing themselves along a gender hierarchy, in a process where they masculinize themselves and emasculate the other states. Accordingly, within states, “the story about the ideal citizens of a state being “just warrior” men who protect “beautiful soul” women is more than a story about people’s gender roles-it is a story about states’ gender roles” (Sjoberg 2014, 109).

Particularly, feminist research underlines how violence is a continuum, which is embedded in pre-existing gender inequalities intersecting and strengthening hierarchies of class, race/ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, religion and sexuality (True and Tanyag 2019, 15) and which is manifested through the viewpoint or “situated knowledge” of the oppressed (Haraway 1988). Moreover, violence is characterised by different dimensions and layers: physical, symbolic and structural (True and Tanyag 2019). Finally, specifically important is the notion of “gendered violence”, defined by Butler (2004, 35) as the violence which “emerges from a profound desire to keep the binary order of gender natural or necessary”, thus according to Shepherd (2008, 2), while approaching security, feminists “should study the subjects produced through gendered violence in the context of debates over the meaning and content of security”.

Looking, consequently, at security studies, Walt defines this field as

the study of the threat, use, and control of military force ... [that is] the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent or engage in war (1992, 211).

At the same time, in the study of security processes, a realist approach is still prevailing, an approach which asserts to be gender-neutral but which, since Sun Tzu, Thucydides and Machiavelli, is, instead, considered to support gender domination in order to preserve the state (Goldstein 2001). Still, there are many other approaches: critical theorists look at the normative dimensions of war in order to change what is unjust about it (Linklater 1996), indeed Critical Security Studies⁶² started asking “whose security” was at stake; other theorists are interested in processes of securitization and desecuritization (that is how specific issues are considered to be part of the realm of security; Buzan 1983; McSweeney 1996). Buzan (1991), for example, was one of the first scholars to look at the multidimensional nature of the core concept of security: political, economic, societal and environmental dimensions. Similarly, the Copenhagen school of thought pays attention to the non-military aspects of security observing state policy discourses and which kinds of violence are not included (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998). In fact, Stern (2006, 201) talks of an illusory nature of “the dominant logic of (in)security” given that “even the most careful attempts at representation” will inevitably exclude some voices and subject positions.

On the other hand, as Tickner (2001) explains, feminist approaches “differ in that they adopt gender as a central category of analysis for understanding how unequal social structures, particularly gender hierarchies, negatively impact the security of individuals and groups” (2001, 48). Especially important in these terms is the approach called “human security” (Sen and Nussbaum 1993), which defines security as “freedom from fear and freedom from want”, making reference to seven categories corresponding to the political, community, economic, environmental, food, health and personal sphere (UNDP 1994). This comprehension of security, equating security with people, rather than with states, and with development, rather than with arms, was first introduced at the international level with the UNDP’s 1994 Human Development Report (Tickner 2019, 22). Feminists, though, have suggested that while human security theorists treat these seven categories as gender neutral, they are not (Sjoberg 2014, 131). Further, human rights and inclusivity (as the capability to engage with

⁶² These studies contest the central role of the state in political research and are characterized by an emancipatory nature, for instance according to Tickner (2004, 47) they look at caring and humanitarian sides within the military, such as PKOs, and at the increasing presence of women and homosexuals.

multiplicities of inequalities), are the foundations of a comprehensive gender security (Swaine 2019, 772).

Thus, already at the 1985 Women's International Peace Conference participants gave different definitions of security according to the most immediate threats to their survival, for example women from the Global South defined security in broad terms making reference to the notion of structural violence⁶³, as connected to imperialism, militarism, racism and sexism (Tickner 1992, 54). In the same year, this understanding of security was endorsed also by the Third United Nation's Women's Conference in Nairobi, which reviewed the achievements of the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985). Still, we can observe that the commitment to define peace and security comprehensively can be traced back at least to the Women's Peace Congress in the Hague in 1915, which already demanded a "positive peace", including social justice and not merely the end of war (Tickner 2019, 15). These broad definitions of peace and security, after being reaffirmed at the UN women's conferences, from Mexico City to Beijing in 1995, were finally endorsed in UNSCR 1325, which established the WPS Agenda.

Therefore, feminist scholars have recognized that both security and peace are profoundly gendered concepts and, by asserting that "true security cannot be achieved until unequal power structures of gender, race and class are eliminated or diminished" they have displayed the multilevel and multidimensional definition of security (Tickner 2019, 16).

5.1 Just war?

Thereive a definition of war and conflict, it is possible to observe that there are different opinions among experts, for instance, for what concerns the definition of war, very classical is the description of it as: "the continuation of politics by other means" (Von Clausewitz 1940)⁶⁴. Considering the military organization, as observed in the previous chapter, as a type of organization that has its own norms, values, rituals and specific forms of socialization (Cockerham 2003), it is possible to delineate war as a social activity based on some form of organization (Creveld 1991).

⁶³ Tickner borrowed the term "structural violence" from peace researchers to "denote a condition whereby those on the margins of the international system were condemned to a shorter life expectancy through the uneven allocation of resources" (1992, 13, citing Galtung 1969). Indeed, trying to find a more precise understanding of peace, Galtung (1969) explained that violence can come from invisible sources and affect people in indirect ways (Alexander 2019, 27), on the other hand this concept, as originally formulated, has also been criticised for its total lack of analysis of gender (Alexander 2019).

⁶⁴ Interestingly Foucault (2003) underlines how, on the other hand, also "politics is the continuation of war by other means".

5.1.1 Making war ethical and legal

“Warfare is one of the most paradoxical of all human activities” as Kinsella and Carr (2007, 1) underline, it is almost universally condemned but also tragically ordinary in human life. Still, as much paradoxically, human beings have long tried to establish rules and laws to make war “just”. Primarily the spread of Christianity in the Western world led to a specific consideration of human life which brought with it the emergence of what can be called the morality of warfare (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 2). A more comprehensive conceptualization of the morality of warfare, though, was elaborated only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when different philosophers, especially in the field of natural law⁶⁵, systematically examined the setting of just war theory. An extremely important event in this process was the Peace of Westphalia (1648): in fact, after the Thirty Years’ War, European states started to acknowledge each other’s independence and sovereignty and mutual interstate relations, thus the resort to war was more and more considered as a last expedient (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 3-4). Thus, the just war tradition has tried to discipline the conduct of war, speculating about when and why war is justified (*jus ad bellum*), how wars should be fought from a moral point of view (*jus in bello*) and finally about the punishment of possible crimes of war (*jus post bellum*).

As a result, the law of armed conflict (LOAC) developed as that part of international law which manages the conduct of armed conflict and intends to protect persons who are not or are no longer directly participating in the hostilities and to restrict the means and methods of warfare available to the warring parties. The provisions of LOAC, which deal with both international and non-international armed conflicts and are mostly developed, is implemented and interpreted by the military and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (Gardam 2010).

After the adoption of the 1945 UN Charter outlawing war and the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, on the background of a growing emphasis on human rights, this area of law, previously known as the law of war or the laws and customs of war, has become known as LOAC or international humanitarian law (IHL). In fact, the former is the preferred term of the military, which stresses the requirements of military efficiency, the latter, with its emphasis on the humanitarian aspects of the rules, is the preferred term of the ICRC. Further, LOAC along with International Human Rights Law (IHRL) is at the core of International Criminal Law (ICL) in governing armed conflict, its provisions are the major components of the jurisdiction of the 1993 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former

⁶⁵ Legal positivism and natural law are characterized by different assumptions about how is known, according to the former a law is known because of its source, according to the latter because of its moral character (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 58).

Yugoslavia and the 1994 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as well as of the 2002 International Criminal Court (Gardam 2018, 37-38).

Overall, though, LOAC depicts a representation of women where they are seen only for their weakness, at the physical and psychological level, and for their sexual and reproductive capacity, both as civilians and combatants (Gardam 2018, 40). Further, the issue of sexual violence is framed in terms of the honour of women which is constructed by means of concepts such as chastity, modesty and weakness and consequently is not based on any idea of women as autonomous subjects but only on a patriarchal understanding of women (Gardam 2018, 40; see also Butterfield and Heineman 2018, 68 ss.). Indeed, Sellers (2008) describes the language of LOAC as “Victorian code language”.

Thence, the civilian population is seen as a homogenous group in the field of LOAC, where women stand out only in their roles as mothers and victims of sexual violence (Sjoberg 2006). Still, recent conflicts show how current legal frameworks are inadequate to fully deal with the experiences of women in conflict and post-conflict situations (Ní Aoláin, Cahn, Haynes and Valji 2018a, xxxv ss.).

Considering that the approach of the military to LOAC is mostly pragmatic and aimed at military victory rather than being concerned with the protection of civilians or specifically women (Gardam 2018, 42)⁶⁶, only the ICRC, as the second major actor in this field, could work towards modifying this framework. Indeed, in 2012 the ICRC has started a revision of the Commentaries on the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional protocols, but according to Gardam (2018, 43), women still lack “any meaningful participation in debates centering on the strategic and tactical issues of the conduct of hostilities”.

5.1.2 The UN: abolishing or revising war?

While the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919 introduced some limitations to the *jus ad bellum*, as traditionally understood in international law, the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War of 1928, known also as the Pact of Paris or Kellogg-Briand Pact, condemned “recourse to war for the solution of international controversies” and expressed a commitment to renounce war (McDougal and Feliciano 1961).

⁶⁶ On the other hand, Counter Insurgency (COIN) approaches are bringing to a perception of military victory not only in terms of insurgent casualties but also in terms of reducing civilian casualties and subsequently investing in being perceived as legitimate actors (Gardam 2018, 44).

In 1945 the Charter of the United Nations, in its Chapter VII, using terms such as “threat to the peace”, “breach of the peace” and “act of aggression”, deliberately ambiguous (especially the term aggression which became highly debated), outlined the powers of the Security Council to maintain international peace and security, in fact, the Security Council can "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" (art.39) and take military and nonmilitary action (art. 41 and art.42). Thus, the UN Charter prohibits to UN member states to attack other UN member states, in accordance with its core and founding principle “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (Preamble of the UN Charter). A principle manifested already during the Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946) with the definition of crime against peace as "starting or waging a war against the territorial integrity, political independence or sovereignty of a state, or in violation of international treaties or agreements", thus as the crime which is the precondition for all the other war crimes, precisely described as “the supreme international crime” during the opening statement. Moreover, the UN recognized aggression as a customary law offense (see for example Antonopoulos, 2016), thus as evidence of a general practice accepted as law (Klabbers 2017, 279). Yet, the crime of aggression has been until very recently blocked in a “legal limbo” (Ferencz 2017, 25). Indeed, even if the statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), adopted in 1998, provides the court with jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, the ICC lacked any actual power over this crime until the 17 of July 2018, when it was decided to activate jurisdiction over it. The definition of the crime was finally reached by the member states at a review conference in Kampala in 2010 and is now contained in the Statute’s art. 8 bis, whose main element is that the act of aggression must constitute a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

On the other hand, defence against aggression is considered a just cause for war, further self-defence can be not only pre-emptive but even preventive in specific circumstances (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 187). At the same time, while the UN General Assembly’s 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States (Resolution 2625) in its Annex states that “No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State” as considered contrary to international law, the UN Charter is not so rigorous. In fact, Article 2 states that nothing in the charter authorizes intervention into “matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of any state” and Chapter VII of the UN Charter gives power to the Security Council in order to maintain international peace and security, not domestic, yet, as recognized by the Council, also internal humanitarian crises can threaten regional peace and security (Kinsella and Carr 2007, 187 ss.).

Still, while the UN Charter declares its commitment to the elimination of war, as outlined in the previous paragraph, “the expansion of humanitarian law- a process that excluded feminist voices- aimed to restrain, not eliminate war” (Butterfield and Heineman 2018, 69). Indeed, it is important to consider that the UN Charter put its emphasis on the rights of individuals, rather than those of states, and connects the advancement of human rights to peace (Lauren 2011). This focus on human rights plays an important role also in the way women are understood within this framework. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledged women’s rights, not protections. As clearly explained by Butterfield and Heineman (2018, 70) “entitlements and protections reinforce dependency and are interpreted as charity rather than rights granted to self-determinate beings”.

Overall, it is important to observe, though, the progressive convergence of IHRL, IHL and ICL (Sellers 2008): indeed, according to Mudgway (2017, 1459-1460) contrary to humanitarian law, the human rights framework applies both in peacetime and during conflict, moreover individuals are considered directly for their role as rights holders who have international human rights that states are directly and legally required to fulfil and protect, whether violated by state or non-state actors. Contrarily Modirzadeh (2010) argues that when the political authority is not stable, civilians are even more vulnerable if considered as rights holders instead of focusing on the fact that parties to a conflict have specific IHL obligations to those individuals.

5.1.3 From a “right to intervene” to “the responsibility to protect”: from a rights-based logic to an ethics of care

Considering the long debate about intervention for human protection purposes, Evans and Sahnoun (2002) affirm that the issue must be reframed not as an argument about the “right to intervene” but about the “responsibility to protect”. Indeed, this kind of view which understands sovereignty in terms of responsibility moves away from intervention to protection, while also moving away from the idea of a humanitarian intervention⁶⁷ (in this way also disconnecting the term humanitarian from the military). In addition, it shifts the focus from those who plan the intervention to those who need help and consequently it makes it clear how the primary responsibility is with the state of the persons in need of protection. In case that state cannot or does not want to comply with its responsibility, or is the perpetrator, the international community has the responsibility to act in substitution.

⁶⁷ Defined by Heathcote (2018, 199) as: “the use of military force to halt either state-led violence against its citizens or a significant group of citizens within the state, or the use of force to intervene when a state is unwilling or unable to respond to the widespread violence of non-state actors or a non-human made disaster”.

Thence, this concept implies a shift in the understanding of sovereignty, which is no more seen as control but as responsibility and has also been strongly influenced by the concept of human security, which focuses on the protection of individuals rather than on state security. Indeed, sovereignty is now usually understood in terms of a dual responsibility: an external responsibility to respect the sovereignty of other states and an internal responsibility to respect the dignity and human rights of the people inside the state. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the Security Council started mentioning human rights and humanitarian concerns⁶⁸ as threats to international peace and security (Mills and Karp 2015, 234).

Of primary importance in this regard has been the work of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), established by the Canadian government as a reaction to the unauthorized military intervention of NATO in Kosovo in 1999, just one month before the adoption of Resolution 1325. Indeed, this intervention was considered to be against the UN Charter and particularly its article 2 (4), which outlaws the use of force in international relations, while others viewed military intervention for humanitarian purposes as legitimate. Thus, the Commission stated the principle of “Responsibility to Protect”, affirming “that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe- from mass murder and rape to starvation- but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states” (ICISS 2001). The development of this principle was simultaneous with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the beginning of the WPS Agenda, similarly focusing on protection, nevertheless the report of the ICISS, entitled “The Responsibility to Protect”, even if published one year and two months after UNSCR 1325 was adopted, made no explicit references to the wider WPS Agenda (Hultman and Johansson 2017, 134).

5.2 Just peace?

Peace is a path made up of people who “are anticipating and managing conflicts without violence, and are engaging in inclusive social change processes that improve the quality of life” (International

⁶⁸ Human rights and humanitarianism display a different understanding of agency, moreover the former framework is a political project which focuses on the dignity of all human beings, while the latter is about ensuring that people survive day by day (Mills and Karp 2015, 224).

Alert 2010, 15). Furthermore, strong connections have been suggested between peace and countries with good reports on women's rights (Caprioli 2000, 2005). Still, as Otto (2018, 105) underlines, in the forty-five references to the word "peace" in the UN Charter, almost every time there is a connection to the term "security", rather than other concepts such as development or human rights, as observable in the well-known phrase "international peace and security", which appears also in the Security Council WPS Agenda. Consequently, according to the scholar, who endorses a feminist concept of positive peace, better analysed below, peace has "become captive to the militarized security frame of the Council's operation" (Otto 2018, 105).

5.2.1 A human right to peace: a feminist understanding of peace

While some scholars do not understand peace as a specific human right, since they argue that it is not recognized as such in international human rights law (see for instance Donnelly 2006 or Julio and Drumond 2017), the connection between peace and human rights is undeniable.

Already at the Women's Peace Congress, held at the Hague in 1915, Addams, the first president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), pointed out how democracy, social justice and peace were mutually defining concepts, still at that time the construction of peace was strongly linked to a maternalistic rhetoric. Moreover, the Hague Congress identified three components of permanent peace: equal participation of women and men in conflict-related decision-making; universal disarmament and the adoption of measures to prevent the many adverse effects of war on women, especially sexual violence, which can be connected to the WPS Agenda pillars of protection and prevention⁶⁹ (Otto 2018).

The UN itself adopted two different declarations on peace: the 1984 UN Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace and the 2016 UN Declaration on the Right to Peace. The former displays a classical approach to the right to peace, which is understood in terms of relationships among countries while there is no referring to human rights issues (Guillermet Fernandez and Fernandez Puyana, 2017), except for recalling that a life without war is necessary for the full implementation of the rights and fundamental human freedoms proclaimed by the UN. The latter, instead, shows a completely different understanding of a right to peace, in fact the Preamble mentions many different human rights

⁶⁹ Still, while the Security Council is, at least ritualistically engaged with women's participation, the WPS resolutions do not make any reference to the historical feminist goal of general disarmament, apart from some mentions in relation to DDR programs (Otto 2018, 110-111).

instruments, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, thus a much more comprehensive understanding of peace is delineated. Indeed, it is explicitly stated that “peace is not only the absence of conflict but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation”. Further, the declaration makes reference to the idea of a culture of peace and education for peace, while states are considered only in their function as vehicles to build peace within and between societies.

Considering the core feminist concept of ethics of care⁷⁰, Robinson (1999, 30) emphasized how to bring an ethic of care to the global scale would dismantle the dichotomy between public and private, “a move that is central to feminist thinking”, and help building social relations also at the global level; in fact, in their understanding of security, feminists assert that to behave morally is a relational capacity which is learned exactly through mutual connections (Robinson 1999, 30). Similarly, approaching peace-building, Porter (2007) uses the concept of an ethics of care, exactly because of its essence which is always related to a specific context and thus different from a justice approach to ethics, based on a neutral conception of individual rights and a neutral anonymous “other”. In fact, she affirms that this latter position, with its strict dual conceptualization of the world in right or wrong, friend or enemy, is at the core of violent insecurity, whereas the former, as prone to dialogue and relating to others as concrete and unique individuals, is necessary for peace-building (Porter 2007, 43-46). This ethics of care, thence, focusing on context and personal experiences and nurture, can look at women’s lives in all their manifestations, while revealing the male privilege in the definition of security and insecurity (Tickner 2019, 22). Indeed, “the positive side of peace is the transformative element. Peace processes cannot be seen as just political or security blueprints. They are and must be societal processes” (Naraghi Anderlini 2019, 50).

In fact, thinking about the crucial shift towards an understanding of security in human terms, in 2003 the Commission on Human Security presented to the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan a report called “Human Security Now”, which, stressing that ‘Human Security complements state security, strengthens human development and enhances human rights’ (Basch 2004), asserted the fundamental interrelation among peace, security, equality, human rights and development (Bunch 2004, 30).

Indeed, as Nobel Peace Laureate Maathai writes “peace cannot exist without equitable development, just as development requires sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and

⁷⁰ As introduced by moral psychologist Gilligan, in her landmark book “In a Different Voice” (1982), and Noddings, it criticizes the traditional understanding of moral reasoning revolving around concepts such as justice, fairness and rights while it emphasizes the relevance of particular relations and connections and the needs and responsibilities of particular people (Tong and Fernandes Botts 2017).

peaceful space” (Maathai 2008). Thence, considering the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced by the UN General Assembly in 2015, SDG 5, which is about gender equality and grounded on CEDAW, stresses how equality between men and women is necessary for sustainable peace and development. On the other hand, the SDG Agenda includes peace among its five key concepts as exemplified by SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies⁷¹ (Balakrishnana and Dharmaraj 2019, 706).

5.2.2 The UN system

Considering specifically, at this point, the framework of the UN, it is necessary to look at the fact that peace operations are usually complex and multidimensional activities (Foradori 2018, 500), where “peacekeepers are the tip of the iceberg in terms of international presence in a post-conflict context” (McLeod 2019, 346). Indeed, it is possible to talk of a “peacebuilding culture” (Auteserre 2010, 13) made up of very different actors with very different ideas about how to understand “post-conflict reconstruction” and gender. While the focus of this research is on the more traditional understanding of peacekeeping as carried out by military (and to a lesser extent police) personnel, this section will briefly outline the different components of peace operations.

Looking at conflict prevention, it is possible to notice how it concerns the diplomatic measures which try to avoid the occurrence of violent conflict (United Nations), whilst the other stages normally develop when the conflict has already began. Indeed, peacemaking comprehends the initial measures taken to bring the opposing parties to stop the conflict and create the basis for reconstruction; peacekeeping is aimed at keeping peace between the parties and usually involves multinational military, police, civilian and observer forces (Fortna 2008) and was developed during the Cold War when the Security Council was in any other way in a impasse (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 5). Peace enforcement, also known as “robust” peacekeeping, refers to the Security Council’s authorization to use force within a peacekeeping mandate and has been criticised as part of an increasing militarization of peacekeeping (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 6). Finally, peacebuilding relates to long-term efforts to build a stable peace in the community involved, it encompass processes of reform of the security sector (SSR)⁷² and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants (Coomaraswamy 2015, 177). In this context it is important to mention also the field of transitional justice which, tracing back to the Nuremberg Trials (Alam 2014), is based on a theoretical

⁷¹ Still, this goal does not make any reference to the WPS Agenda or women or gender.

⁷² Particularly, SSR developed as a specific agenda in the late 1990s, stressing that good governance of the security sector is necessary for stability, development and human security, thus it focuses on principles such as accountability, effectiveness and efficiency (Bastick 2019, 360).

interpretation of justice as restoring broken relationships and communities (Bell and O'Rourke 2007, 40)⁷³.

Overall, the term “post-conflict reconstruction” is related to the broad set of activities meant to produce a “stable, reconstituted, and sustainable society after conflict” (Ní Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn 2011, 87) and can comprehend processes and practices such as peacekeeping, peace-building and security sector reform. Additionally, it is necessary to consider that this period is not by definition without violence, as a matter of fact “the labelling of a particular context as post-conflict is highly political” (McLeod 2019, 348). Finally, it is also important to take into account that the process of “reconstructing” is accompanied by normative ideas about what “normal life” is meant to be and thus what gender relations are expected to be (McLeod 2019, 349).

5.2.2.1 The development of peacekeeping

Bearing in mind that “the UN Charter set peace by peaceful means as a core value (although with sound safeguard exceptions)” (Del Turco 2020, 15), PKOs were created in 1948 with the deployment of military observers to the Middle East by the Security Council and, considering the famous quote by former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld “peacekeeping is not a soldier’s job, but only a soldier can do it”, some scholars have underlined the role of peacekeeping in orienting militaries toward a post-national defence (Karim 2019a, 35). In fact, since the 1990s PKOs started to have broader mandates and therefore required new personnel and capabilities (Bertolazzi 2010, 6) and in 1995, influenced also by the UN decade for women (1975-1985), the Secretary-General announced his commitment to increase women’s participation in field missions (Olsson et al. 2015, 37).

As already mentioned at the beginning of this research, with the creation of peacekeeping, the armed forces’ role shifted from war to peace maintenance, an occurrence which changed for the first time their traditional mandate (Del Turco 2020, 8). In fact, considering the triadic conflict structure (Galtung 1996), the landmark 1992 document “An Agenda for Peace” adopted by the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali the role of civilians became as central as that of the military, like Boutros Boutros-Ghali clarified in the Agenda for Peace: “Increasingly, peace-keeping requires that civilian political officers, human rights monitors, electoral officials, refugee and humanitarian aid specialists and police play as central a role as the military” (A/47/277 1992, para. 52). This agenda was then followed by the “Agenda for Development”⁷⁴ and the “Agenda for

⁷³ It embraces various judicial and nonjudicial mechanisms like truth commissions, criminal trials, reparations programs and institutional reforms aimed at the recovery of the whole society (Coomaraswamy and Kenney 2019, 745).

⁷⁴ Boutros-Ghali B, “An Agenda for Development” (A/48/935), 1994. “Development is a fundamental human right. Development is the most secure basis for peace” (A/48/935 1994 para.3).

Democratization”⁷⁵ which brought to the advancement of what was to be known as the “integrated approach”, promoting positive peace, and playing a key role in the elaboration of the concept of human security, foundation of the UN framework in peace and security⁷⁶. Therefore, military peacekeepers and civilian peacebuilders then became “inseparable partners” (Del Turco 2020, 10).

Further, in 1998, Secretary-General Kofi Annan asserted that PKOs need to protect civilians, a statement which brought to the development of two separate but interconnected Security Council thematic agendas: Protection of Civilians (POC) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS). While these two agendas have some similarities, such as the time when they were developed, the focus on human security and the historical origins tracing back to the failure in protecting civilians in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the former is mostly the result of the work of international organizations and the latter of NGOs and activists external to the UN (Dönges and Kullenberg 2019, 161-162).

Thus, after the Cold War, when the Security Council was in the impossibility to act, PKOs became more and more multidimensional and in 1999 the Security Council authorized the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) “to afford protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence” (UNSC 1999: sec.14), consequently POC became a major trait of UN peacekeeping⁷⁷ (Hultman and Muvumba Sellström 2019). In November 2000, with the adoption of the Brahimi Report, the mandates of PKOs became gradually broader in order to embrace peacebuilding tasks, such as activities in the area of SSR and DDR (including the promotion of good governance and human rights) (Karim 2019a, 25). In addition, the high-level Panel chaired by Brahimi in 2000 reviewed the criteria for the use of force and the principles of consent and impartiality. Finally, as we have observed, in 2001 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) officially outlined the concept of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P).

Still, the first document stressing the importance of gender mainstreaming and gender balancing in UN peace operations was the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations, released on 31 May 2000, some months before the UNSCR 1325. This latter mandated PKOs to include women in decision-making roles in all aspects of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding process and, indeed, it mentions the

⁷⁵ Boutros-Ghali B., “An Agenda for Democratization” (A/51/761), 1996. “The peace-keeping mandates entrusted to the United Nations now often include both the restoration of democracy and the protection of human rights” (A/51/761 1996, para.5).

⁷⁶ Further, in 1991 General Assembly Resolution 46/182 established the UN humanitarian system based on structures such as Emergency Relief Coordinator - ERC, Inter-Agency Standing Committee - IASC, Central Emergency Response Fund – CERF and the fundamental principles rooted in the Geneva Conventions and already formally adopted by the Red Cross Movement in 1965: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality.

⁷⁷ Hultman and Muvumba Sellström (2019, 601) underline how the credibility and success of POC is mostly challenged by the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by peacekeepers themselves.

incorporation of a gender perspective in PKOs in different parts. In 2000 the UN adopted UNSCR 1325 and the European Parliament adopted as well a resolution on the participation of women in peaceful conflict settlement (2000/2025(INI)) (Theorin 2000). Since then, gender has been mentioned in almost every PKO mandate, moreover, gender focal points and gender units have been established within peacekeeping missions and women's protection advisors (WPAs) have been deployed to countries with reports of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

It is possible, thus, to talk of different generations of peacekeeping: the latter is distinguished by its complexity, due additionally to the fact that the multinational armed forces involved need to address "also a range of cultural issues arising from cooperation between formations working under quite different national personnel policies" (Dandeker 1998, 85) and they need to engage in diverse functions, interfacing also with the local and international political reality (Carreiras 2006, 74). Moreover, these multilateral, multidimensional and multicultural PKOs include not only military forces but also police forces, international organizations and non-profit organizations, that is actors who come from different nations characterized by different cultural contexts and different understandings of conflict, conflict resolution and, quite importantly, gender roles (Hansen, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 2004). Indeed, particularly since the 1990s more and more police forces have been deployed in peace and stability operations, especially in UN PKOs, in roles which include stability-type tasks and capacity building-type tasks, mostly in case of robust peacekeeping or a peace enforcement frame (Greener 2019, 259-260), and with an emphasis on human rights-centred policing (Bayley 2006)⁷⁸. Thus, not only Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) is increasingly crucial, seen the growing involvement of civilian subjects in various projects (Lilly 2002), but in this overall landscape soft skills and information-based technologies are replacing the traditional need for physical strength (Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 63), although, on the other hand, PKOs are gradually more characterized by mandates allowing the use of force.

Considering this increasing involvement of different actors, the concept of "integrated/comprehensive approach" became a global trend in the International Community policies and among international actors as further discussed in the next chapter. In 2010, to fight against terrorism, to protect stability and to respond to hybrid threats, NATO adopted a "comprehensive approach" involving not only military but also political and civilian instruments. At the EU level, a "comprehensive approach" to external conflict and crisis was defined in 2013, whereas in the OSCE - where cross dimensional activities are connected with the inner structure based on three baskets

⁷⁸ Greener (2019, 267) underlines how this human-rights based models of policing have shaped a less hyper-masculine and less militarized international policing model which can support the WPS goals.

(politico-military; economic–environmental; human dimension) an integrated approach to security was outlined as “cooperative security” in 2003 (Del Turco 2020, 22-23). In addition, in terms of actors’ dynamics, after civil-military cooperation, the hybridization of public and private entities is increasingly relevant in the peace and security environment (Del Turco 2020, 29).

In 2015 the UN released two reports, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report and the 1325 Global Study⁷⁹, which underlined the importance of female peacekeepers. In particular, the HIPPO report (differently than the 2001 Brahimi Report, which only mentioned gender once in its conclusion; Olsson and Tryggestad 2001), takes into clear account gender (Rupesinghe, Stamnes and Karlsrud 2019, 213). On the other hand, in a multinational and multiorganizational environment like that of peacekeeping, in order to substantially integrate women and gender it is necessary to start from the leadership level so that all the activities consider gender and the local context (Oppermann 2019, 129). For instance, DDR processes hardly ever consider the possibility of female soldiers and their different experiences (Sjoberg 2014, 46).

So far, peacekeeping missions have been more successful in gender balancing, because it is easier to assess and enforce (Karim 2019a, 29)⁸⁰ and overall female representation in peacekeeping has been increasing, indeed it was 1% in 1993⁸¹.

At the same time, PKOs are a peculiar reality because peacekeeping personnel is chosen by Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) (Rupesinghe, Stamnes and Karlsrud 2019, 212), thence, as outlined by Crawford, Lebovic and Macdonald (2015), gender diversity, rather than being a primary goal of most contributors, is the result of the actual composition of force sizes. Karim and Beardsley (2017) conclude that countries with higher numbers of women in their national militaries tend to send more female peacekeepers and, similarly, countries with better domestic records of gender equality. Nevertheless, women are more likely to be deployed in missions where fewer peacekeepers die and to host countries with higher gross domestic product (Karim and Breadsley 2013, 2015, 2017), so their deployment is conditioned by the prevalence of a “gendered protection norm” (Rupesinghe, Stamnes and Karlsrud 2019, 212). Additionally, women are not likely to be appointed to high-level positions, because of the fact that there are few women of rank (Karim 2019a, 33). Finally, it is also

⁷⁹ Overall, in 2015 the UN carried out three parallel independent reviews in the field of peace and security: the Global Study, the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (Coomaraswamy and Kenney 2019, 740).

⁸⁰ Moreover, Karim (2019a, 29) reports that pursuing the goal of ‘gender balance’ as suggested in the Beijing Platform for Action, can encourage transformational change in institutions and has been found to lead to different choices in social spending.

⁸¹ Still, the UN started collecting disaggregated data about military personnel in PKOs in 2006 and about police in 2009 (Karim 2019a, 32).

important to consider that most PKOs are today deployed with a Chapter VII mandate by the UN Security Council, enabling them to use force in self-defence or in defence of the mandate, which seems to constrain TCCs from sending female personnel because of the fact that there are no many women in combat roles (Coomaraswamy 2015, 139; Crawford et al. 2015).

In this regard, both the Global Study and HIPPO warned against the increasing trend toward the militarization of peacekeeping (Coomaraswamy 2015; Ramos-Horta et al. 2015), which now involves even counterterrorism operations (Karlsrud 2015; 2017), because, besides, it risks reinforcing hyper-militarized peacekeeping masculinities (Enloe 2000).

5.2.2.2 The development of the WPS Agenda

UNSCR 1325 was adopted in an institutional context, the UN Security Council, which was traditionally seen as a site of masculinized power and militarized understanding of security (Cohn 2008), gradually, though, security came to develop a broader scope which did not only include the state but many referent objects, including the individual human subject. Still, a major issue of this localization is that the Prevention pillar has been the most neglected, often left apart or melted into the Protection pillar, whereas promoting the role of women as agents of change alongside a new approach in dealing with conflict dynamics: participatory and inclusive is the core of this agenda (Del Turco 2020, 17- 18).

In particular, a major turning point in this direction was the definition in 1992 by the CEDAW Committee of gender-based violence against women “as violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately” (CEDAW 1992). Further, recognizing it as “a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men”, it linked the concept with the definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of CEDAW⁸². In 1993, during the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the parties stated that “violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law” (UNGA 1993), which highlighted the connection between violence against women in wartime and peacetime (Chinkin 2019, 27).

In the 1990s, after UNSCR 794, which first addressed violence against civilians as a threat to international peace and security, within the competence of the Security Council (Chinkin 2019, 29),

⁸² The CEDAW Convention is an authoritative international law treaty on women’s human rights which binds its 189 state parties (Patten 2018, 172), still it is the treaty with the greatest amount of reservations and declarations, some regarding its core provisions (Patten 2018, 180).

specific thematic resolutions, characterized by a progressive recognition of the specific condition of women and girls, were approved, showing how some gender mainstreaming was already developing within the Security Council's work even if to a limited extent, indeed it did not appear in the Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations in 2000 (Chinkin 2019, 32).

Considering the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 which, in the chapter on "Women and Armed Conflict", recognized the importance of the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, in 2000 the Security Council issued a presidential statement, which recognised the connection between peace and women's rights. In the same year the Windhoek Declaration, calling for gender mainstreaming in PKOs, equal access and representation of women in peace processes and leadership positions, was adopted. Consequently, on the 30th of October 2000 the Security Council approved UNSCR 1325, followed by nine other resolutions: 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019). Therefore, the actual agenda emerged only in the late 2000s with the second and subsequent Security Council resolutions.

UNSCR 1325, where different NGOs, such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded in 1919 as result of the International Congress of Women held at The Hague in 1915, played a major role, was "welcomed by feminist scholars and activists alike, who described it as a 'landmark resolution' representing a 'new, daring, and ambitious strategy for anti-war feminists', a 'watershed political framework', and a 'significant success story' for gender mainstreaming" (Otto 2015, 4). In fact, for the first time a resolution underlined that "peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women's leadership" (Coomaraswamy 2015, 5). Moreover, while in 2000, just before the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the General Assembly stressed the need to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the CEDAW, in 2013 with the adoption of GR 30 the CEDAW Committee marked the connection between the WPS Agenda and CEDAW affirming that, in order to be compliant with their obligations under CEDAW, states need to implement the resolutions and they need to report on WPS during their periodic reporting to the CEDAW Committee (O'Rourke and Swaine 2019, 673)⁸³.

There are different views on the nature of the WPS Agenda resolutions. Indeed, some authors underline how according to Article 25 of the UN Charter, Security Council resolutions are legally binding on all UN member states and UN entities (Obradovic 2014; Höghammar et al. 2016, 323),

⁸³ Still, CEDAW is mentioned only in some WPS resolutions, also for what regards the resolutions regarding CRSV (O'Rourke and Swaine 2019, 676), which is unfortunate considering that "it is important also to recognize the value in tensions between the security-focus of the Security Council and the feminist and rights-based approach of the CEDAW Committee" (O'Rourke and Swaine 2019, 678).

others sustain that UNSCR 1325 was not adopted under UN Charter Chapter VII, whose article 25 asks UN member states to “agree to accept and carry out” decisions of the Security Council (Chinkin 2019, 28). Nonetheless, not only this resolution acknowledged how rape and sexual violence constitute violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law, but states are bound to it by means of their participation to CEDAW.

While this agenda, as “the architecture through which the gendered impacts of war, violence, and security practices are governed” (George, Lee-Koo and Shepherd 2019, 311), can be understood as an institution in the sense “of it being a set of rules or practices that structure and inform interaction in the realm of peace and security”, in relation to other institutions at the international, regional, national and local levels (George, Lee-Koo and Shepherd 2019, 311), it is also important to stress how it is the result of the pragmatic work of women’s rights activists to draw attention not only to the violence that characterize conflict but also to the inequality which is part of it (Davies and True 2019b, 4). This agenda originates, thus, out of the mutual relationships between the specific institutional context and the local contexts of the women’s rights actors involved (Zwingel 2012).

Therefore, the WPS Agenda is characterized by gendered institutional politics which reflect the way itself it was created as an institution, shaped by two main components: the mobilization of women’s civil society⁸⁴ organizations since the 1990s and the peculiar development within the environment of the Security Council. Indeed, in 2000, a group of civil society organizations “launched a global appeal for a Security Council resolution that would formally recognise women’s rights to participation in peace and security issues and protection in conflict zones” (Naraghi-Anderlini 2007, 7). Thus, UNSCR 1325 was finally drafted and adopted unanimously thanks to the support given by UNIFEM, which later became known as UN Women, and of the Namibian mission. Indeed, the latter had already passed the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations at the Women’s Conference in May 2000 and was one of the elected members to the Security Council, in charge of presidency in October. Moreover, civil society remained engaged in the shaping of the agenda through the NGO Working Group on WPS. Moreover, in 2015 UN Women released the Global Study on the implementation of Resolution 1325, which was conducted to offer “new evidence, ideas and good practices that can help generate new commitments and implement old ones” (Ki-moon 2015, 4) while reaffirming how peace requires the full inclusion of women and substantive equality between men and women, as equality

⁸⁴ “Civil society is a broad term that includes a heterogeneous society and interlinked networks of organizations at the international, transnational, national, local and grass- roots level” (Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic 2019, 429), it “includes those political, cultural and social organizations of modern societies that are autonomous of the state, but part of the mutually-constitutive relationship between state and society” (Lipschutz 1999, 101).

of results rather than merely of access. Moreover, it stressed how women's human rights are the foundation of the WPS Agenda⁸⁵ (Coomaraswamy and Kenney 2019, 741).

The WPS Agenda was initially based on three main Ps: prevention, participation and protection, gradually integrated by relief and recovery, to then include also transitional justice and countering violent extremism (Basu, Kirby and Shepherd 2020, 6). Yet, since the beginning there has been a major focus on the notion of protection, while “participation lags behind”, “relief and recovery” has been characterized as a “siloes latecomer” and “prevention falls by the wayside” (O'Reilly 2019, 194-197). Considering the ten different resolutions which make up the WPS Agenda, UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467, and 2493, it is important to observe that, in chronological order, 1820 strengthens the WPS framework, establishing the exclusion of sexual violence from amnesty provisions (in 1325 excluded only “when feasible”) (Del Turco 2020, 24). UNSC Resolution 1889/2009, presented by Vietnam and characterized by a quite progressive language, categorically reaffirmed the need to focus not only on the protection of women but also on their empowerment in peacebuilding, and on contrasting the tendency to consider women as victims rather than actors when addressing and resolving situations of armed conflicts, it also asked for specific tools that would prove relevant to implementation and accountability: the indicators (Del Turco 2020, 25). UNSCR 2467/2019, which with its 37 Operational Paragraphs, it is definitely the longest and most articulated of all the WPS resolutions, supports the protection from sexual violence, addressing for the first time also the situation of mothers of children born of sexual violence and their children, uses a human rights language, unusual in a Security Council setting (Del Turco 2020, 31). This significant further step towards a human rights mandate affects the work of the Security Council: The more the UNSCR WPS's mandate turns human rights, the more Member States are concerned, and called to act at national level (Del Turco 2020, 32).

Moreover, the WPS Agenda is constituted not only by an international level but also a regional and a national level. Looking at the latter, it is particularly important the role played by the National Action Plans (NAPs), which are characterized by a narrative part, that creates a conceptual framework, and a part outlining the actual implementation of the WPS Agenda, usually composed by a matrix of actions and a framework about monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting. It is particularly relevant, moreover, to examine if the policy has been constructed as an inward- or outward-looking policy (Shepherd 2016), since it reveals the underlying understanding of the whole agenda as a domestic policy or a foreign policy and shows how the state concerned conceptualize itself and its

⁸⁵ Further, both GR 30 and the Global Study acknowledged the relevance of the WPS Agenda for all intergovernmental bodies and human rights mechanisms (Patten 2018, 182).

responsibility (George, Lee-Koo and Shepherd 2019, 319). The 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 argues that effective NAPs need to have strong leadership and coordination, indication of budget, inclusivity in the design, solidity in M&R and flexibility (Coomaraswamy 2015, 241). NAPs turned out to play a vital role also as an important playground of dialogue among all stakeholders at a national level: triggers of a “living process” where “political leadership, line ministries, the armed forces, the police and civil society become connected, and should continue to partner on monitoring and implementation” (Del Turco 2020, 26).

As observed so far, thus, the WPS Agenda has been an integral part of the work of UN DPKO since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, which requires PKOs to include women in decision-making roles in all aspects of peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes, and subsequent resolutions reaffirming the importance of gender in PKOs. In fact, according to Karim and Beardsley (2013) peacekeeping, with its more complex and multidimensional mandates, has progressively intersected with the WPS Agenda making women’s representation and gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping a primary issue in the UN, so that almost all mandates mention gender equality (Karim and Beardsley 2013). This connection is reflected also in the 2015 Global Study which states that peace operations should use the gender mainstreaming logic of UNSCR 1325 (Ramos-Horta et al. 2015, 80).

5.2.2.3 Criticisms to these international frameworks

Considering that the implementation of WPS principles at national and international levels is increasingly focused on state responsibility and action (Kirby and Shepherd 2016, 383), the Security Council’s WPS Agenda has been criticised for supporting the idea that securing international peace relies on military strength and securitized states (Otto 2015, 10).

It is, in fact, necessary to consider that the military and paramilitary are essential components of peacebuilding, collective security, gender and UNSCR 1325 (Heathcote and Otto 2014, 266), nevertheless

for advocates of sustainable peace and security interlinked with development and human rights, the value of the women, peace and security agenda is its potential for transformation, rather than greater representation of women in existing paradigms of militarized response (Coomaraswamy 2015, 135).

Furthermore, this agenda has been questioned for being primarily centred on the pillar of protection: indeed, this rhetoric about victimhood and protection offers an understanding of women solely in terms of victims who need the paternalistic protection offered by the international community (Ní

Aoláin and Valji 2019, 55). As Shepherd (2011, 506) underlines, in UNSCR 1325 women are mostly described as “fragile, passive and in need of protection” (Shepherd 2011, 506). Overall, “feminists activists and researchers warn against the misappropriation of feminist demands in protection and securitization narratives, indeed in itself the protector-protected relationship is fundamentally unequal and invites paternalism” (Åse 2019, 277) and can help supporting discourses of white Western supremacy (Eisenstein 2007; Hunt 2002). In fact, this focus on protection is also seen as part of an overall trend towards militarism in the West, reflecting a narrative which displays Western states as protectors of vulnerable people in the Global South (Doty 1996; Orford 2011; Hall and Shepherd 2013) and relying on “hierarchical notions of ‘first-world’ saviours and ‘third-world’ victims that require protection”, thus recalling Western colonialism narratives (Eichler 2019, 163). In fact, Parashar (2019, 831 ss.) asks whose norms and whose agenda are represented by the WPS framework, especially considering how women in the Global South have also modified their own vocabularies, shifting from “protection” and “security” to “freedom” and “access”.

Similarly, Åse (2019, 278) suggests that, by focusing on protection, the agenda lacks the opportunity for a more fundamental questioning “of war-making and military violence as necessary and acceptable political actions”, thus it actually ends legitimating war-making rather than protecting women and girls. Indeed, this agenda has been blamed for its use as an instrument to make war safe for women and girls (Shepherd 2016).

Other important criticisms have concerned the conflation of gender with women in the UN norms and policies and the lack of analysis of men and masculinities, so as of power relations (Puechguirbal 2010; Shepherd 2008), in fact gender is seen only in connection to either women’s participation or protection, especially from SEA (Basu, Kirby and Shpepherd 2020, 13).

Moreover, not only feminism understands the hierarchic gender order, based on normative heterosexuality and gender binary, as a practice of violence (McKey 2005; York 2011)⁸⁶, but Shepherd argues that the use of women and femininity in the WPS Agenda, built on a liberal interpretation of gender and politics, which creates an essentialized understanding of women as an homogeneous group characterized by a common pacifism, is a form of gendered violence itself. In fact, contesting the predominant association of feminism with peace⁸⁷, Zalewski and Runyan (2019, 106) protest that “[a]s feminist scholars we acknowledge the violent force of feminism as something required in order to challenge hegemonic knowledge and practices”. Indeed, feminism itself has been

⁸⁶ Consequently, they see violence against women as a system to maintain that order (Penttinen 2019, 253).

⁸⁷ See also Welland (2019, 135) making reference to the long association of femininity with peace and masculinity with war and Tickner (2019, 20 ss.) dealing with the problematic association of women and peace.

incorporated within the global security agenda, as long as it fits with these discourses (Zalewsky and Runyan 2019, 112). True and Tanyag (2019, 21) similarly question this uncritical association of women and peace as a sign of empowerment and the lack of attention for the voices which remain or are kept silent. Further, True and Tanyag (2019, 23) warn against the resort to short-term and militarized forms of security, while they claim that for a sustainable peace to be achieved it is necessary a comprehensive understanding of violence, as a continuum. In fact, “a concentration on high-profile extraordinary violence has obscured attention from the regular violence that women routinely experience in conflict and post-conflict societies” (Ní Aoláin and Valji 2019, 55).

Moreover, according to Zalewsky and Runyan (2019, 110) the “spectacularization of SGBV” on the global scene has brought to “whitewashed and neocolonial images of sexual violence”, which are often instrumentalized in the name of a racialized and Islamophobic ‘war on terror’, but also prevents an effective analysis of sexual violence. In fact, this agenda has been strongly criticized because of its tendency, which is part of a broader trend at the international level, to over-emphasize CRSV⁸⁸. On the one hand, this narrative about “rape as a weapon of war” has brought to acknowledge this problem as a threat to peace and security (Carter 2010), on the other hand it risks over-simplifying CRSV itself (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013), reproducing stereotypical configurations of women represented solely in terms of their victimhood and sexual and reproductive identities (Gardam and Jarvis 2001). Additionally, this limited focus can divert attention from sexual violence outside of war or perpetrated by ‘peacekeepers’ (Whitworth 2004), from the specific experiences of men (Carpenter 2006) and from other forms of violence which occur to women during conflict (Gardam and Jarvis 2001).⁸⁹ Moreover, this securitization of sexual violence, which is seen only in terms of a threat to be addressed by security actors without consideration for other peaceful methods of conflict resolution, can potentially bring to the continuation of violence itself (Hirschauer 2014; Pratt 2013).

In fact, the UN is committed to build sustainable peace, a notion which takes into consideration “not only efforts to prevent relapse into conflict, but also to prevent lapse into conflict in the first place” (UN 2015, para. 7). Thus, according to Coomaraswamy and Kenney (2019, 743) this commitment also requires that “wealthy and powerful states must prioritize peace over profit, and address their

⁸⁸ Engle (2018, 132) explains how these two statements can summarize the understanding of the relationship between gender and conflict today: “1) sexual violence is the predominant, if not paradigmatic, concern regarding gender and conflict, and-at times-conflict in general; and 2) sexual violence is a tactic of war that both accompanies and is fuelled by a culture of impunity, and should be primarily responded to with criminal sanctions”.

⁸⁹ Moreover, considering how war rape has been defined, in relation to the famous definition of war by Clausewitz, as “the continuation of patriarchy by other means” (Kirby 2019, 216), reflecting on the existence of an overall patriarchal structure, Boesten (2014) underlines how peacetime gender relations are as much violent.

complicity in conflict through global arms dealing and militarization-the proverbial elephant in the Security Council chamber” (2019, 743).

Further, the WPS resolutions manifest depoliticized ideas of gender that do not question gender structures but focus only on integrating women (Taylor 2007), while, as a matter of fact, UNSCR 1325 remarks that peace is directly linked to equality between men and women. Taking into account, thus, how meaningful women’s participation is crucial also for the other pillars of protection, prevention and recovery (O’Reilly 2019, 197 ss.), it is required not only to oppose “the women’s protection-for-empowerment narrative”, which has been instrumentalized for instance in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Hudson 2012) but also to commit to a real analysis of the meaning of gender equality, which is considered to be a better indicator of the level of peacefulness in a state than its levels of democracy or wealth (Hudson et al. 2012).

As observed so far, “criticisms of the WPS Agenda abound” in terms of its selectivity, its essentialism and its inadequacy to challenge the war system (Otto 2010a), on the other hand it is necessary to understand that the WPS Agenda is a “‘work in progress’ and an institution under development”, shaped by “gendered politics, feminist politics and institutional politics and cultures within and between institutions” whose encounters can have many different outcomes (George, Lee-Koo and Shepherd 2019, 320).

5.3 Which role for women?

It is paramount to observe how the arguments connecting women to peacefulness and motherhood, which were used to exclude women from military service, as analysed in the previous chapter, are now being used to force their inclusion⁹⁰. While we can observe an inversion of the traditional gender symbolism of “men as culture” and “women as nature” because men are considered as not able to control their “basic” needs and thus in need of the inclusion of women to constrain their virility (Walgenbach 2005), yet the demands placed by the international community rely on traditional gender roles referring to the male soldier and the female caring and emotional Other (Dittmer and Apelt 2008, 71), an image which implements and reinforces the dichotomy between a “male-warrior” and a “female-worrier” (Yuval-Davis 1997). Moreover, the instrumental approach adopted by the UN places a burden on women to succeed in order to be accepted, while men’s participation does not need to be justified (Karim and Beardsley 2017; Karim and Henry 2018). Indeed, the UN itself affirms

⁹⁰ On the other hand, it is quite interesting to observe, as Carreiras (2006, 197) points out, “the apparently surprising convergence between those who manage war and those who oppose it: between military conservatism and pacifist feminism, both opposing the military participation of women”.

that: “women’s presence [...] makes men peacekeepers more reflective and responsible” (Karim 2019b, 340), placing thus a specific and mostly unwanted responsibility on women.

In fact, the UN has justified women’s inclusion in peacekeeping by means of different reasons mostly focused on the concept of military effectiveness, thence in terms of success for the peacekeeping mission itself (Karim and Beardsley 2017, 46-48; see also Karim and Henry 2018, 396 and Dufour 2020, 108). In this sense, the UN uses many examples such as “female peacekeepers act as role models in the local environment, inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and for participation in peace processes” which will be observed into detail in the next chapter. As discussed in the previous chapter, an instrumentalist approach can work quite well within the military thanks to the fact that it stresses the utility of the WPS Agenda to reinforce and maximize effectiveness. Thus, different actors, from policymakers to academics, have used the argument of operational effectiveness (Karim 2019b, 340) in order to get support for the implementation of this agenda (Egnell, Hojem and Berts 2014). On the other hand, though, there are simply not enough women in missions, especially at leadership levels, to verify these statements (Karim 2019b, 341)⁹¹. Moreover, female peacekeepers tend to be sent to the safest missions (Karim and Beardsley 2013, 2015, 2017), are usually deployed in specific roles as doctors, nurses and administrative staff (Karim and Beardsley 2017; Cold-Ravnkilde and Albrecht 2016) and rarely interact with local women (Karim 2017). Thus, if women do not participate to all missions equally and cannot really connect with locals, it is not easy to really understand the benefits brought by female peacekeepers (Karim 2019a, 33)⁹².

Still, feminist scholars reply that UNSCR 1325 was not adopted with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of the military but to reach international peace and security by means of a transformative gender perspective (Egnell and Alam 2019, 263). In addition, this approach is based on an essentialist representation of women which considers women only in terms of their potential utility and not on equal terms with men and which does not question the war system so that it risks bringing to the co-optation of feminist efforts by institutions not actually pursuing feminist goals (as Lorde, 1984, 110 says: “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”) (Egnell and Alam 2019, 264).

5.3.1 Peacekeeping and WPS: challenging or reinforcing the status-quo?

⁹¹ Nevertheless, the overall number of female peacekeepers is increasing both in the military and police sectors (Karim and Henry 2018, 391).

⁹² In particular, there is very little research “on what women bring to the table when they have a voice or the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming programs” (Gizelis and Krause 2015, but also on the precise direction and dynamics of causality between women’s participation, gender equality and peace (Goetz and Jenkins 2018, 121).

Some scholars see great potential in peacekeeping as a way to change the military system itself, Enloe (1993 as in Dittmer and Apelt, 2008), for instance, argues that peacekeeping can help soldiers construct a definition of masculinity which is not necessarily a military or patriarchal masculinity. Duncanson (2013) as well thinks that peacekeeping and peacebuilding can reconstruct militarized masculinist and, in fact, this is the same reformist feminist approach displayed by international organizations, such as the UN and NATO. Similarly, Karim and Henry (2018, 396) affirm that peacekeeping offers very different roles to soldiers than those to which they were socialized in national militaries, indeed PKOs are in need of skills such as mediation and interaction with civilians, NGOs and personnel with very different backgrounds.

On the other hand, while Duncanson (2013) see the possibility for a new peacebuilder masculinity, Whitworth (2004) asserts that the military will not automatically advocate different forms of masculinities or shape different gender hierarchies as a result of the involvement in peacekeeping or of an internal changing gender composition (Persson 2011). In fact, Carreiras (2010) argues that because peacekeeping personnel come from military and police institutions, which have characteristic gender dynamics, peacekeeping missions will reproduce the same gender relations, thus according to Karim (2019a, 35), gender equality in national institutions seems to be necessary for gender mainstreaming in PKOs. Similarly, considering the overall “militarization and masculinization of peace, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace-building, development, and humanitarianism” (Mazurana 2005, 38), Heinecken (2019, 217) talks of an

hypermasculine peacekeeping environment associated with high levels of violence and abuse against women, thus hostile to women at various levels, which reinforces patriarchy and a militarized masculinity in which women are seen as vulnerable and in need of protection. Moreover, women tend to be considered as a “gendered” security threat in making the peacekeeping force more vulnerable to attack.

Thus, feminist scholars assert that peacekeeping, in a system which is highly militarized, cannot actually improve women’s security (Whitworth 2004; Willet 2010; Khalid 2015; Shepherd 2016). One way to solve this issue, according to Karim and Beardsley (2017), would be the introduction of “equal opportunity peacekeeping” (Karim and Beardsley 2017), that is a type of peacekeeping which includes a more holistic and transformational approach to peacekeeping, focused on altering existing structures in peacekeeping missions in order to make them more egalitarian. This approach, thus, would require working in order to change the gendered nature of the mission by modifying practices, roles and activities and reach gender equality: for instance by changing the selection of leaders,

standards for recruitment, promotion and evaluation (Karim 2019b, 343). In this sense it is fundamental the concept of Gender Responsive Peacekeeping, as developed by the whole UN system⁹³, which will be considered in the next chapter. In fact, seen that “UN peacekeepers are the main actors in the UN system in the implementation of WPS mandates” (DPO Gender Unit 2019), a transformation of the whole peacekeeping system is required.

⁹³ See the policy “Gender responsive UN peacekeeping operations” (DPKO and DFS 2018).

6. How the WPS Agenda lives in a multi-level governance context

"It is now more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern wars." (Major General Patrick Cammaert, Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo)⁹⁴

As Coomaraswamy reminds us in the wide 2015 Global Study (2015, 28) “It is hard to think of one resolution that is better known for its name, number, and content” than UNSCR 1325. Still, it is necessary to look at the many different discourses and narratives which intertwine in the multi-layered framework of peace and security processes so as to understand how they influence the specific Italian and Swedish contexts. First of all, looking at the very birth of the WPS Agenda, this chapter zooms in on the structure of the United Nations, to then gradually examine the other multilateral actors involved in its developing.

In the first place, it is necessary to consider that the 20th anniversary of the WPS Agenda has occurred in times characterized by thorny challenges. First and foremost, the COVID-19 crisis which has brought new trials in the life of women, strengthening existing inequalities and gender inequalities in particular⁹⁵, moreover, the advance of authoritarian and extreme right ideologies all over the world has jeopardized the participation of women in peace and security processes. Likewise, the very DPO talks of structural gender norms, power dynamics, patriarchal structures and value systems which pose a significant barrier to the successful implementation of WPS commitments, as well as of the “disruptive force of COVID-19 pandemic which is exacerbating existing gender inequalities”⁹⁶ (DPO 2020c, 8).

Indeed, within the multilateral system they are part of, states are increasingly doubting “established standards of women’s rights” and while “xenophobic populism grows” shaking the very foundations of this system not only a gender analysis is absent (Taylor and Baldwin 2019, 1) but also the very notion of gender is completely distorted and depicted as an enemy which through a so called “gender ideology”, understood in terms of a movement aimed at protecting LGBTQ+ rights and non-traditional family structures, is threatening national values and acceptable ways of life. In this

⁹⁴ See <https://www.peacewomen.org/content/international-worldwide-its-more-dangerous-be-woman-soldier-modern-wars>

⁹⁵ Thence it is fundamental to recall the Secretary-General's Appeal for Global Ceasefire made on the 23 March 2020.

⁹⁶ It affirms that “[t]his is particularly the case for women in conflict and fragile settings where political solutions remain fragile”, besides “COVID-19 has led to a surge of violence against women and girls creating a pandemic within a pandemic” (DPO 2020c, 8).

problematic trend, women's rights activists not only lack support but are even attacked by means of anti-feminist discourses framing feminism as a global war against men (Taylor and Baldwin 2019, 4). This overall backlash against gender equality has been described by UN Secretary-General António Guterres as “the overwhelming injustice of our age and the biggest human rights challenge we face” (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020). Thus, it is possible to talk of a “tyranny of the emergency” instigated by the climate change's dangerous effects, in a context where UNSCR 2532/2020, which reaffirms the UN Secretary-General's Appeal for Global Ceasefire of March 2020, still remains unheard (Del Turco 2020, 28). Still, “the transformative potential of the WPS Agenda is immense” (Taylor and Baldwin 2019, 9), thus, it is fundamental for the WPS Agenda to start looking at broader issues such as “the vast landscape between violence and voting” (Marks and Chenoweth 2020, 1), whilst always keeping in mind that “WPS is not a niche agenda for women; it is a gender equality and peace agenda that seeks to mainstream gender perspectives to better prevent and respond to insecurity” (Bjarnegård, Melander and True 2020, 1). Accordingly, as UN Secretary-General demanded, it is time to “push back against the pushback” on the WPS Agenda (UN 2019b, 3).

6.1 The WPS Agenda

As we have observed so far, the WPS Agenda is made up of ten different resolutions: 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

6.1.1 UNSCR 1325 (2000)

After having mentioned previous related documents, such as resolutions 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999) on Children and Armed Conflict, 1296 (2000) and 1314 (2000) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, but also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in 1995 and the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly of 2000, also known as "Beijing Plus Five", **UNSCR 1325** starts by recalling that the main purpose of the Security Council in the framework of the UN Charter is “the maintenance of international peace and security”. It then continues by stressing how civilians, “particularly women and children”, are the most affected by armed conflict, a circumstance which impacts the possibility of “durable peace and reconciliation”, thus it asks for women's “equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security” in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. The resolution calls then attention to the “special needs of women and girls” in mine programmes and to the urgency of mainstreaming a

gender perspective into PKOs, according to the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations. In fact, it stresses that the commitment to ensure women's "protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security". Finally, highlighting the need for data in order to be able to understand the condition of women and children, it enumerates specific requests: first it asks Member States and the Secretary-General to ensure a greater representation and participation of women at all decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes, particularly incorporating a gender perspective into PKOs, and then it asks them to ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, demanding parties to armed conflicts to take the measures necessary to safeguard women and girls from gender-based violence.

6.1.2 UNSCR 1820 (2008)

The second resolution, **UNSCR 1820 (2008)**, which explicitly mentions also the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Optional Protocol thereto, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto; similarly to the previous one, merges "women and children" and "women and girls" into one category. It then stresses "the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security", and the need to increase their role in decision-making, durable peace, security and reconciliation. It then focuses on the cessation of sexual violence which "when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security"; thus, in "a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice, truth, and national reconciliation" it is necessary to end impunity for these crimes, moreover it makes reference to the deployment of a higher percentage of women peacekeepers or police, stressing continuously the requirement of the equal and full participation of women.

6.1.3 UNSCR 1888 (2009)

The third resolution, **UNSCR 1888 (2009)**, focuses on conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), demanding the designation of a Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict and introducing the role of Women Protection Advisors (WPAs) in PKOs and a Team of Experts to mobilize in case of CRSV. It clearly begins by reaffirming the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, to then focus on "widespread or systematic sexual

violence in situations of armed conflict” which affects women and children. Further, it acknowledges “the underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes”, but it also stresses that “the promotion and empowerment of women and that support for women’s organizations and networks are essential in the consolidation of peace to promote the equal and full participation of women”. It then proceeds by

[w]elcoming the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions, and recognizing that women and children affected by armed conflict may feel more secure working with and reporting abuse to women in peacekeeping missions, and that the presence of women peacekeepers may encourage local women to participate in the national armed and security forces, thereby helping to build a security sector that is accessible and responsive to all, especially women.

Whereas appreciating the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) to develop gender guidelines to be used by military personnel in PKOs, it also recommends “to promote gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system, women’s empowerment and gender equality”. Moreover, highlighting the important role of women in rebuilding society, it demands to deploy greater numbers of female military and police personnel to PKOs and to implement the policy of zero tolerance of SEA in PKOs, but it also mentions the necessity to develop early warning indicators.

6.1.4 UNSCR 1889 (2010)

The fourth, **UNSCR 1889** (2010), that looks at post-conflict peacebuilding and requires the elaboration of indicators to measure the implementation of UNSCR 1325, asserts

the need for the full, equal and effective participation of women at all stages of peace processes given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, reaffirming the key role women can play in re-establishing the fabric of recovering society and stressing the need for their involvement in the development and implementation of post-conflict strategies in order to take into account their perspectives and needs.

It has, though, to recognize “the under-representation of women at all stages of peace processes” and “the persistent obstacles to women’s full involvement”, calling attention to the fact that “the marginalization of women can delay or undermine the achievement of durable peace, security and reconciliation”, thus preventing women’s empowerment. Additionally, it acknowledges that “women in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations continue to be often considered as victims

and not as actors”, indeed it is essential “to focus not only on protection of women but also on their empowerment in peacebuilding”. Even remarking their “particular needs”, the resolution puts many times emphasis on “women’s leadership and capacity”, “women’s capacity to participate equally”, restressing the imperative to “increase women’s participation in United Nations political, peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions”.

6.1.5 UNSCR 1960 (2011)

The fifth, **UNSCR 1960** (2011), deals with the prevention of and protection from CRSV. Making all the time reference to the merged category of women and children, the resolution starts mentioning the report of the Secretary-General of 24 November 2010 (S/2010/604), on the implementation of UNSCRs 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), which provides an analytical framing of CRSV, and the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/64/19). The latter deals with the need for adequate capabilities and clear and appropriate guidelines to enable peacekeeping missions to carry out all their mandated tasks. Thus, the resolution “reaffirms that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the United Nations, in accordance with the Charter, and affirms that United Nations peacekeeping is one of the key instruments available to the United Nations in discharging that responsibility”, “as the only United Nations forum mandated to review comprehensively the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects”. It then underlines that the presence of women in peacekeeping missions can encourage women from local communities to report acts of sexual violence. It also underscores that sexual violence can significantly exacerbate and prolong situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, so it introduces “naming and shaming” and other listing mechanisms. Finally, it requests to enhance data collection and asks Member States to deploy greater numbers of female military and police personnel to UN PKOs and to implement the policy of zero tolerance on SEA, furthermore, the Secretary-General is required to present a plan on the timely and ethical collection of information.

6.1.6 UNSCR 2106 (2013)

The sixth, **UNSCR 2106** (2013), the fourth resolution on CRSV, recalling the report of the Secretary-General of 12 March 2013 (S/2013/149), on sexual violence in conflict, and the Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted by G8 foreign ministers in London on 11 April 2013, affirms “that women’s political, social and economic empowerment, gender equality and the enlistment of men and boys in the effort to combat all forms of violence against women are central to long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” while it mentions the importance of the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), supported by the

ongoing work on a set of indicators, and the particular assistance of UN Women. It also stresses how CRSV prevents the critical contributions of women to society and also durable peace and security as well as sustainable development. It also draws attention to the Arms Trade Treaty which calls for exporting States Parties to consider that arms may be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. While defining “women’s participation as essential” in prevention and protection, it homogenises not only women and children but also women and girls. Having noted that the approach to transitional justice needs to be comprehensive and to encompass the whole scope of judicial and non-judicial measures, it then underlines the fundamental and different roles of the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict⁹⁷, Women Protection Advisors (WPA) and Gender Advisors, whereas mentioning the necessity “to increase the number of women recruited and deployed in peace operations”, the policy of zero tolerance on SEA, effective participation of women, DDR processes, SSR processes and justice sector reform initiatives.

6.1.7 UNSCR 2122 (2013)

The seventh, **UNSCR 2122** (2013), after having recalled all the main instruments of soft and hard law related to the WPS Agenda, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN and the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, reaffirms that women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality are critical to efforts to maintain international peace and security. Considering also the report of the Secretary-General of 4 September 2013, issued according to the request of the Security Council (S/PRST/2010/22), to continue to submit an annual report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), it uses terms and sentences such as “dedicated commitment to women’s empowerment, participation, and human rights”, “women’s engagement”, “protection from human rights abuses and violations; opportunities for women to exercise leadership; resources provided to address their needs and which will help them exercise their rights; and the capacities and commitment of all actors involved in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions to advance women’s participation and protection”, while acknowledging “women’s exacerbated vulnerability”. On the other hand, it also mentions themes such as forced displacement, enforced disappearances, and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Moreover, it asserts “that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence between political, security, development, human rights, including gender equality, and rule of law and justice activities”, which, therefore, requires “to address the gaps and strengthen links

⁹⁷ United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) is a cross-UN initiative that unites the work of 14 United Nations entities with the goal of ending sexual violence in conflict, whose Secretariat is based in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

between the United Nations peace and security in the field, human rights and development work as a means to address root causes of armed conflict and threats to the security of women and girls in the pursuit of international peace and security”. Importantly it makes reference to the Peacebuilding Commission’s declaration on women’s economic empowerment for peacebuilding of 26 September 2013 (PBC/7/OC/L.1), identifying its role in the stabilization of post-conflict societies. It then pinpoints “women’s leadership and participation”, “promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women”, “women’s full participation and protection”, the need to “support women’s leadership development and full participation in all levels of decision-making; the equal and full participation of women at decision-making levels”, “women’s full and meaningful participation”, “women and women’s perspectives”, but it also highlights the function of “women’s organizations and women leaders, including socially and/or economically excluded groups of women”. It then urges member states to increase the percentage of women military and police in PKOs. Finally, announcing the call for a High-level Review in 2015 to assess the implementation of UNSCR 1325, it asks the Secretary-General to commission a global study on its implementation.

6.1.8 UNSCR 2242 (2015)

The eight, **UNSCR 2242** (2015), recalling the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, welcomes the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Empowerment held on 27 September 2015; General Recommendation 30 of the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on Women and Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Situations and the report of the Secretary-General of 17 September 2015 (S/2015/716) submitting the results of the Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. In addition, it underlines “the substantial link between women’s meaningful involvement in efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild from conflict and those efforts’ effectiveness and long-term sustainability”, considering also the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446), the Report of the Secretary-General on the Future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/682), and the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (S/2015/490) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its focus on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While also in this case the focus is on women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality; women’s empowerment; women’s participation and human rights; women’s engagement, it also declares how crucial is the involvement of men and boys as partners in peace and security processes, as well in view of the changing global context of peace and security. In fact, it also stresses how sexual violence is an obstacle to “the restoration of international peace and security”. It, besides, underlines that the WPS Agenda is a cross-cutting subject in all

relevant thematic areas, including terrorism and violent extremism. Considering the overall under-representation of women and the recommendations of the Global Study, it also sanctions the new Global Acceleration Instrument on women’s engagement in peace and security and humanitarian affairs as a dedicated fund for reaching “women’s meaningful inclusion”, “women’s effective inclusion” and “women’s empowerment and gender equality”. Furthermore, it introduces the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security and it stresses the importance of country-specific considerations and relevant thematic areas and it asks the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Political Affairs to always include the necessary gender analysis and technical gender expertise so as to consider the needs and participation of women and develop gender responsive UN PKOs, in fact it also aims at doubling the numbers of women in military and police contingents of UN PKOs in the next five years. In the context of the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, for which it is necessary to create counter narratives, it also demands to conduct and gather gender-sensitive research and data collection in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses, supporting women’s participation, leadership and empowerment as core, including through capacity-building efforts. Considering that the rate of female participation in peacekeeping forces has changed slowly over the past quarter century, growing from 1 percent total in 1993 to just 4 percent of military peacekeepers and 10 percent of police personnel in 2017⁹⁸, and that nearly half of all troop-contributing countries do not contribute any female military observers or staff officers whatsoever; UNSCR 2242 endorses the use of financial incentives to bolster female peacekeepers⁹⁹.

6.1.9 UNSCR 2467 (2019)

The ninth resolution, **UNSCR 2467** (2019), reaffirming the necessity of a dedicated commitment to women’s participation and protection and promotion of human rights and of a consistent support to building women’s engagement at all levels of decision-making, and mentioning the report of the Secretary-General of 29 March 2019 (S/2019/280) on CRSV; still makes consistently use of the blended groups of women and children and women and girls. Addressing the imminent twenty-year anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the resolution highlights that the UN Security Council remains

deeply concerned by the frequent under-representation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and

⁹⁸ which is quite far from the UN targets of 15 percent and 20 percent, respectively (Council on Foreign Relations 2018).

⁹⁹ According to the Council on Foreign Relations, which released a study in 2016, the UN should pay a premium to police- and troop-contributing countries based on the percentage of high-ranking women they assign to each contingent, ensuring that they have influential roles, “which would improve the operational effectiveness, accessibility, and credibility of peacekeeping missions by providing personnel with diverse perspectives and a broader range of skills” (Council on Foreign Relations 2018).

security, the relatively low number of women in senior positions in political, peace and security related national, regional and international institutions, the lack of adequate gender sensitive humanitarian responses and support for women's leadership roles in these settings, insufficient financing for women, peace and security, and the resulting detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security.

Indeed, it acknowledges that in order to promote “gender equality and women’s political, social, and economic empowerment”, and thus for the meaningful participation of women and girls in peace processes, their safety and empowerment is vital, in fact “women’s protection and participation are inextricably linked and mutually-reinforcing”. While pointing out again the under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles, it stresses also the need for examining the root causes of sexual violence against all women and girls as part of conflict prevention, indeed “sexual violence in conflict occurs on a continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls”, even if “conflict also exacerbates the frequency and brutality of other forms of gender based violence”. Moreover, it reiterates the requisite of a survivor-centred approach in combating CRSV, of a sustained engagement and meaningful participation of civil society, including women leaders and women’s organizations, in all peace processes, and of gathering accurate, reliable timely and sex-disaggregated information. The text is sprinkled by expressions like “the full and meaningful participation of survivors”; “women’s leadership and participation”; “women-led and survivor-led organizations”; “women’s active and meaningful engagement in peace processes to strengthen gender equality, women’s empowerment and protection”; “structural gender inequality and discrimination”; “promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women”; “women’s full and effective participation and protection”; “ensure further that women are present and meaningfully participate”. Finally, it also recognizes the urgency of provisions for women with children born because of CRSV but also for men and boys victims of CRSV. As a matter of fact it asks member states to “offer appropriate responses to male survivors and challenge cultural assumptions about male invulnerability to such violence” and it points out that CRSV can be considered a gender related form of persecution according to international refugee law.

6.1.10 UNSCR 2493 (2019)

Finally, the tenth resolution, **UNSCR 2493** (2019), underscores “the importance to achieve sustainable peace and security by dialogue, mediation, consultations and political negotiations to bridge differences and to end conflicts”. While condemning “the frequent under-representation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and

security”, it also places emphasis on “the opportunity presented by the number of significant anniversaries in 2020 notably the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”, therefore it requests Member States to guarantee “the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes, including through mainstreaming a gender perspective, and remain committed to increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions”, “to enhance their participation and capacity building”, “to promote all the rights of women, including civil, political and economic rights”, “gender equality and women’s economic empowerment and security”, “more inclusive participation” and “women’s full and effective participation”, moreover it asks them to address threats, harassment, violence and hate speech against civil society actors¹⁰⁰.

6.1.11 Overall considerations

Given all these various resolutions, it is necessary to consider also that in August 2020, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2538, which focuses on women and peacekeeping, yet not considered directly part of the WPS Agenda (Kaptan 2020, 17¹⁰¹). Having observed the texts of this core resolutions, it is important to reflect on the fact that “words are not enough to produce commitment to peace and gender equality, nor do they guarantee accelerated action towards achieving a gender-just world” (Kaptan 2020, 5). As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the obstacles to the implementation of this agenda are surrounding the very text of the resolutions rather than being within it. WILPF (2020a) highlights militarism and militarisation (and the subsequent almost complete exclusion of a debate about conflict prevention, disarmament and demilitarisation); the patriarchal and political backlash against the WPS Agenda; and a lack of accountability for its implementation, as the main challenges to its progress. Therefore, “this common jargon can serve to create a façade of concern by states over lack of implementation, rather than a resolve to discuss why the lack is there to begin with” (Kaptan 2020, 6).

As observed by reading the texts of the different resolutions, since UNSCR 1325 the scope of the WPS Agenda has broadened, indeed “the UNSC now addresses issues such as women human rights defenders, gender-responsive reparations, structural gender inequalities, and women’s leadership in peacebuilding” (Kaptan 2020, 7). Moreover, as pointed out, in 2010 a list of complete indicators has

¹⁰⁰ Even if “moving from commitments to accomplishments” remains a challenge, UNSCR 2493 marks some improvements, for instance in the introduction women’s participation is defined “equal” and not just “meaningful” as it used to (Del Turco 2020, 34).

¹⁰¹ For a different view see: “we now have a total of 11 Security Council resolutions. They include the latest Resolution 2538, devoted exclusively to the role of women in peace operations” (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020).

been developed, in 2015 the three high-level reviews on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 were released and in 2016 the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS was set up in order to coordinate the work of the UNSC in the area, lastly many member states have officially reiterated their commitment towards the implementation of the WPS Agenda at important events in 2010, 2015 and 2019 (Kaptan 2020, 8).

On the other hand, notwithstanding the rhetoric utilised in these documents, as remarked in the last report of WILPF, released in October 2020, the WPS Agenda is not actually employed with the aim of preventing or ending war and conflict but rather of making war and conflict safer for women. Indeed, in February 2020 during an Arria-Formula meeting on women human rights defenders, WILPF Secretary-General, Madeleine Rees stated: “there is a massive conflict of interest in this room. Those who sell weapons need wars in order to continue to sell weapons. In no other body would that be considered a true balance of power. Those who sell the weapons get to keep peace” (Kaptan 2020, 11). Indeed, as we could see, the main focus of this agenda, especially for what regards its implementation, is put on the incorporation of more women in pre-existing institutions, “armed structures of power, specifically the military and peacekeeping operations”, while arms and armament are addressed only in 4 out of 10 WPS resolutions and only in terms of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their improper use in particular in relation to gender-based violence (GBV) (Kaptan 2020, 11-12). This lack of a reflexive critical analysis is particularly problematic considering that States are actually directly involved in wars and conflicts by means of arms trade, military manoeuvres and foreign political and economic policies, still this agenda is mostly considered as a foreign policy tool concerning war affected countries¹⁰². An approach which reveals a “neocolonial framework of intervention, with Global North countries coming to the rescue of Global South countries to solve their supposed problems”, whilst forgetting the potentiality of this agenda in building peace and gender equality within the domestic society (Kaptan 2020, 13-14).

Furthermore, as highlighted also by the 2015 Global Study on WPS, this limited and militarised definitions of conflict, peace, and security not only prevent root cause analysis, such as on pre-existing structural inequalities, but also shapes an overall attitude which can be observed for instance in the framing of the reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of a war against the virus. On the other hand, considering how this health crisis has revealed the fragility of our corporate, neoliberal,

¹⁰² For example the report explains that a representative from WILPF Australia argued that “Australia did WPS to others”, while a representative from WILPF Denmark, referring to the focus of the domestic NAP on rescuing women in Afghanistan, stressed that “they [the Danish government] didn’t ask the women what they wanted” and a representative from WILPF Sweden reported that, seen how UNSCR 1325 is considered “a peace/war resolution”, it is also considered not applicable to Sweden (Kaptan 2020, 13-14).

and militarised global order, prevention must be built on “systems and economies of care, not arms and military systems that only exacerbate global insecurity” (Kaptan 2020, 16-17).

Moreover, as observed by reading the texts of the WPS resolutions, there is a lack of reflection on the concept of gender, represented by “silences and absences around sexual and reproductive rights, the impact of conflict on sexual and gender minorities, and the refusal to think more deeply about masculinities”. As examined so far, this approach “collapses women and girls into a homogeneous category” ignoring their different experiences based on the context and on components such as “age, ethnicity, indigeneity, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, economic access, disability, country, and citizenship status”. Instead, an intersectional approach could also allow to address gender norms (namely constructions of masculinities and femininities) and the rights of LGBTQI people and other marginalised populations (Kaptan 2020, 21).

In fact, for what regards the fundamental pillar of participation, which is mentioned so many times in the different resolutions jointly with the theme of leadership, it mostly remains pro forma, without taking into account the necessity of a “meaningful inclusion”. Indeed, the WPS Agenda is “a means to an end (creating sustainable, peaceful communities grounded in gender equality) rather than being an end in itself” (Kaptan 2020, 24). In this sense, the NGO Open Group on WPS addressed the Security Council by affirming that: “Twenty years ago, the architects of Resolution 1325 created history”, on the other hand they immediately draw attention to the fact that “these words have remained rhetoric rather than lived reality for the 264 million women and girls living in conflict across the globe.” Indeed, they remark that “[f]ull, equal and meaningful participation means direct, substantive and formal inclusion of diverse women”, that “[p]articipation without the ability to influence the outcome is not participation, it is observation” and finally that “[e]nsuring meaningful participation requires dismantling systemic gender inequality and discrimination” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 1). The NGO Working Group continues affirming that: “[o]n the 20th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325, we join our voices with those of women leaders and activists around the globe to reiterate the principle at the foundation of the WPS Agenda — nothing less than the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace and security. We agree with Secretary-General Guterres that “women’s inequality should shame us all” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020b). Considering that “2020 has already been a year like no other”, also new challenges to peace and security, including climate change and public health crises such as COVID-19, should be addressed by placing at the frontline women’s participation. Thus, bearing in mind that “[t]he world is changing and all international actors, including the Security Council and the UN, must change with it”, “sustainable peace and

gender equality requires structural transformation, respect for human rights, collective responsibility and accountability, and inclusive, meaningful participation of conflict-affected communities”. In order to reach this goal then what is needed is not only active support and resources but also a clear grounding in international human rights and humanitarian law, including the full range of women’s human rights, the prevention of threats to women participating in the process and full accountability for all the actors (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 2). In fact, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stresses that the WPS Agenda is “a call to action to the Security Council, Member States and the UN system”. On the other hand, not only specifically UNSCR 2493 (2019) has brought to “standardize the phrasing women’s “full, equal and meaningful” participation¹⁰³, especially in the duo “women's meaningful participation and leadership” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 4), but also “the Security Council’s approach to WPS remains superficial, ad-hoc, inconsistent and subject to the individual efforts of Security Council members”, while there is clearly “both a lack of accountability and a lack of willingness to tackle the harder and more complex issues under the WPS Agenda” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 5). In fact, women’s meaningful participation “is often framed as a way to increase the effectiveness of a peace process rather than the realization of women's rights”, whereas, as observed many times so far, “[w]omen are continuously viewed as a homogenous group by the Security Council, resulting in the marginalization of the views and experiences of women and girls with disabilities, young women, displaced women and girls and indigenous women and girls” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 5). Thence, instead of recurring to an intersectional approach to gender equality, “women are primarily referred to as a monolithic group throughout the work of the Security Council” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 15).

As brought to attention above, in order to track the implementation of the WPS Agenda, the WPS Index has been developed by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) in collaboration with the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). This index considers the three primary measures of women’s well-being, that is inclusion (at the economic, social and political level); justice (both in terms of formal laws and informal discrimination); and security (at the family, community, and societal levels), operationalized by means of 11 indicators in order to rank states on women’s equality. The first report was published in 2017 and the second one in 2019. The 2019 report created a global ranking of 167 countries and, for the first-time, created also subnational indexes for

¹⁰³ “[...] underlining the need for structured and formal inclusion of women so that they are in decision-making positions and have influence over the outcomes of the processes they are participating in” (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2020a, 4).

three of the world's largest countries (China, India, and Nigeria); it will be updated again in 2021 (Klugman 2019b, vi). According to the report, “[w]omen’s inclusion, justice, and security matter. They matter to women and to their families, communities, and economies and societies at large. The world is more secure, peaceful, and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunities”. Further, it outlines the increasing acknowledgment that it is essential to engage men and boys in order to achieve universal human rights (GIWPS 2019, 4) and it recognizes that violent conflict is associated with gender inequality in areas such as education, financial inclusion, employment and intimate partner violence (GIWPS 2019, 5). Thus, the WPS Index highlights that “promoting gender equality and increasing women’s inclusion, justice, and security are central not only to women’s well-being but also to the world’s prospects for security and peace¹⁰⁴(GIWPS 2019, 6), as asked by the SDG target 16.1, which requires gender transformative approaches (GIWPS 2019, 52). Moreover, it is especially important the commitment of single states to the agenda, indeed in April 2019, the United Kingdom and Germany invited the other Member States, the UN and regional organizations to express public commitment to the WPS Agenda: sixty-four Member States, 8 UN entities, and 3 regional organizations made commitments, which are monitored by UN Women and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (UN Women undated a). Considering also that in 2018 the UN Secretary General requested the senior leadership to form a working group on emergency measures to achieve gender parity in peace operations by 2028, a promising tool is the aforementioned UNSCR 2538/2020, presented by Indonesia, which encourages women’s participation in the UN peacekeeping force, promoting the role of women as “peace agents” under the UN peacekeeping force. In particular, it requests UN Member States, the UN Secretariat and regional organizations to work for the full, effective and meaningful participation of both uniformed and civilian women in PKOs at all levels and in all positions, including in senior leadership. In this sense, it has been especially important the creation of networks of regional women mediators: the Global Alliance was established in September 2019 and its founding members are Femwise-Africa, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Nordic Women Mediators Network and the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth (Del Turco 2020, 35).

6.2 The UN framework

Looking at the UN framework, it is important to consider that the military personnel deployed to peace operations is constituted by contingent troops, military experts on mission (MEMs), and staff officers. The former group is made up of members of national contingents, MEMs and staff officers are deployed individually, even if the latter are part of a national contingent (Smit and Tidblad-

¹⁰⁴ See for instance the research of Hudson and Caprioli (GIWPS 2019, 53-54).

Lundholm 2018, 15). For what regards police personnel, the UN distinguishes between individual police officers (IPOs) and formed police units (FPUs), whereas the former are individually deployed (in some cases in so-called specialized police teams, SPTs), the latter are units with a standard size of 140 police from one country. Both of them are deployed on secondment by a member state (Smit and Tidblad-Lundholm 2018, 18). Finally, the international civilian personnel in UN missions are normally contracted directly by the UN Secretariat or individual missions (Smit and Tidblad-Lundholm 2018, 20-21). As already examined in this study, PKOs have proved to shorten the duration of the conflict, reduce civilian and military deaths, and contain the spread of the conflict; moreover, they can promote the access to health and education services but also foreign aid and direct investment (Gizelis 2020, 2-3), overall, they improve the quality of life for women. In this sense, it is vital to be mindful that gender equality is not only a normative goal but also an indicator of social capacity which directly supports development and peace (Gizelis 2020, 5). Further, the increasing characterization of conflicts as “multi-level” calls for peace processes that are similarly “multi-level” (Bell, 2019), involving among the main actors the very civil society, as the best bridge to the local context and the local population. In fact, even considering the contexts where “there is no peace to keep,” not only several missions are explicitly mandated to promote and protect human rights and civilians, but all peace operations and all UN personnel are legally obligated to comply with human rights standards and international humanitarian and refugee law and to defend UN human rights principles (Di Razza and Sherman 2020, 7).

During an interview within the context of the office of Military Affairs in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations¹⁰⁵, the interviewee underlined how the decision to join the armed forces, which were still described as a male-dominated organization, was mostly taken for a personal sense of gratitude (especially in light of the vicissitudes endured by the country of the interviewee), a commitment which fits with the UN itself where a human rights perspective is present all over the spectrum in UN missions and where the presence of women is very important in their function as role models. In this sense, it is important to observe that while between 1957 and 1989, only twenty uniformed women served as UN peacekeepers, as of January 2020, 5284 uniformed women were actively deployed (6.4 % of military and police personnel) (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 2). Moreover, the Office of Military Affairs set a target of 25 percent of contracted military staff and 25 percent of its military observers and staff officers to be women by 2028 and a 15 percent of women within troop contingents by 2028. The Police Division aims for 35 percent of its seconded headquarters staff, 30 percent of its seconded field mission staff, 30 percent of individual police

¹⁰⁵ During an interview held on the 19 of January 2020.

officers, and 20 percent of members of formed police units (FPUs) to be women by the same year (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 3).

6.2.1 The WPS reports: self-reflexivity within the UN

It is a requirement at this point to look at the Secretary-General reports on the WPS Agenda, released according to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of its resolution 1325 (2000), and to UNSCR 2122 (2013), in which it called for updates on progress, challenges and gaps across all areas of the WPS Agenda.

The last Report on WPS was published on the 27 of September 2021. Bringing attention to the very recent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the Secretary General reminds us that: “And yet, Afghan women were not included among the negotiators with the Taliban in 2020. When delegates representing the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan met in Moscow in March 2021 to discuss the peace negotiations, there was only one woman among them”, moreover as of 31 December 2020, only 5.2 per cent of military troops in peace operations were women, which is below the 6.5 per cent target set by the United Nations for 2020 (Secretary-General 2021, 2)¹⁰⁶.

Highlighting that “[e]xtensive academic literature has shown the cost of privileging warfare over welfare” (Secretary-General 2021, 4), this report explicitly observes that:

“Curbing military spending has been a chief strategic objective of the women’s movement for peace and a core commitment of the United Nations since its foundation. It is especially resonant in the current moment, when people’s lives and security are threatened by disease, forced displacement, hunger, racism, violent misogyny and the climate crisis. Commitments to reducing military expenditure and controlling the availability of armaments had already been included in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and reaffirmed more recently during the 2021 Generation Equality Forum. Recent research commissioned by UN-Women, using data from 153 countries from 1990 to 2019, suggests a clear association between militarization and gender

¹⁰⁶ Though, the report also acknowledges that in 2020 the Security-Council adopted the first resolution on peacekeeping “fully devoted to women and gender equality”, UNSCR 2538 (2020), and the first resolution on COVID-19, UNSCR 2532 (2020), which “called for concrete actions to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the response” (Secretary-General 2021, 32).

inequality. This association is stronger in countries with lower income or lower levels of democracy”¹⁰⁷ (Secretary-General 2021, 3).

Yet, according to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), only 39% of NAPs up to 2020 had at least one mention of weapons-related issues and among the 10 UNSCRs on WPS, only 4 address weapons and military expenditure: 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019), which, additionally, only focus on small arms and light weapons in relation to the Arms Trade Treaty, whose article 7 (4) points out the need to determine the risk of gender-based violence in arms exports assessments (Secretary-General 2021, 5). On the other hand, to change this trend in military spending, it is important to understand also the role and involvement of women in decision-making processes, in fact “[g]ender equality is a question of power. But power will not redistribute itself equally in a male-dominated world” (Secretary-General 2021, 7). Thus, the Secretary-General reflects on the COVID-19 pandemic and the shadow pandemic of intimate partner violence which has increased since the beginning of the lockdowns worldwide (Secretary-General 2021, 13). Accordingly, women’s advocates ask for shelters and sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and safe abortion, to be considered as essential and in need of continued support (Secretary-General 2021, 14)¹⁰⁸. Furthermore, the Secretary-General denounces that, despite the role played by the COVID-19 pandemic, “the driving forces behind these trends were sexism and misogyny, enabled by patriarchal social, religious and other institutions, and often intentionally spread by powerful political actors” (Secretary-General 2021, 15). The report also recognizes that “[t]he long-term effects of historical discrimination, recently compounded by the pandemic, have disadvantaged women in all spheres, including political and public life”¹⁰⁹. To reverse inequality, the Secretary-General declares that “commitment to non-discrimination alone is not enough: proactive measures to increase women’s meaningful participation and representation are needed. Gender quotas, in addition to other temporary special measures, have proven to be an effective way to achieve

¹⁰⁷ See also the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament and resolution 75/43, where the General Assembly argued that the money spent on increasing global military expenditure, could otherwise be spent on development needs.

¹⁰⁸ Still at the beginning of the pandemic, UNFPA (the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency) projected that more than 47 million women could lose access to contraception, leading to 7 million unintended pregnancies, further during the COVID-19 crisis, rates of child marriage increased, especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries (Secretary-General 2021, 14).

¹⁰⁹ In this context, in 2020, OHCHR (the UN Human Rights Office) verified 35 cases of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in seven conflict-affected countries which is an increase in the reported numbers for 2018 and 2019 (Secretary-General 2021, 16). The report also observes that women serve as Heads of State or Government in 22 countries, hold just 25.5 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide (18.9 % in conflict and post-conflict countries), moreover globally women constitute 36.3 per cent of local-level elected positions (25.9% in conflict-affected countries). Finally, they made up only one quarter of members among COVID-19 task forces across conflict and post-conflict countries (Secretary-General 2021, 17).

a major shift in the distribution of power” (Secretary-General 2021, 17). Addressing the theme of economic recovery and access to resources, the Secretary-General contends that:

“There is a continued expectation that women’s care work is a catch-all safety net that can absorb the costs of wars, disasters or pandemics to the detriment of women’s own economic aspirations or participation in public life. However, this safety net has a limit, and when the care burden of women is invisible and unsupported it condemns women to extreme poverty” (Secretary-General 2021, 19).

Considering the more recent pillar of “Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism”, the report explains that since the adoption of UNSCR 2242 in 2015, demanding the integration of the WPS Agenda in the work to counter violent extremism and terrorism,

there has been a significant increase in gender-related recommendations to Member States by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; a growing number of references to gender in Security Council resolutions on issues such as the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters, the links between terrorism, trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, and efforts to counter terrorist narratives; and an exponential growth in research on this area, including the gender dimensions of extreme right-wing terrorism (Secretary-General 2021, 21-22).

Considering that “[t]he implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is the responsibility of all Member States”, the document makes reference to the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, launched at the Generation Equality Forum in Paris on 2 July 2021, as a clear expression of this need to realize commitments. Indeed, as of August 2021, 149 signatories, including Member States, regional organizations, United Nations entities, the private sector, civil society and academia, had committed to at least one of the proposed actions (Secretary-General 2021, 24).

Finally, being aware that “[f]or the United Nations, part of leading by example involves living up to the commitments to gender parity” (Secretary-General 2021, 26), the Secretary-General points out “Since I took office, reaching gender parity within the United Nations system and in peacekeeping has been one of my top priorities”, as a matter of fact

[s]upporting positive, proactive measures to increase women's participation in peace processes and political transitions is part of a necessary strategy aimed at achieving sustainable peace and women's de facto equality. We have seen the difference women make when we have parity in the United Nations, and when the representation of women in politics is increased (Secretary-General 2021, 33)

thus, he asks for “innovative campaigns”, “people-centred policies” and “to progressively and responsibly shift military expenditure to human security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding” (Secretary-General 2021, 34).

The 2020 Report on WPS opens by admitting how “[t]he United Nations entered 2020 envisioning to make it a milestone year for progress towards realizing global commitments on gender equality and women and peace and security” and, indeed, considering the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, “if anything, the sense of urgency has increased” (Secretary-General 2020, 1). In fact, not only women are already suffering but there is strong concern about “the diversion of resources from efforts aimed at women’s health, including sexual and reproductive health, the long-term impact on the participation of girls in education and employment among women and a backslide towards infringing women’s rights, with the pandemic as the pretext”. In this sense, the Secretary-General points out that “we should be asking: whose peace? whose security?”, moreover UNSCR 2532 (2020) emphasized the critical role of women in the COVID-19 crisis and the necessity “to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the development and implementation of an adequate and sustainable response to the pandemic” (Secretary-General 2020, 1).

Looking at the ten WPS resolutions, “centred on the importance of women’s human rights and the leadership of women in preventing and responding to crises”, indeed the Secretary-General affirms how “[a]t its core, the women and peace and security agenda is a crisis-prevention agenda”, the report describes women’s groups as “essential leaders in emergencies” on the pathway for more equal and inclusive societies (Secretary-General 2020, 2). Accordingly, making use of data gathered by the UN system, the report lists as key findings:

(a) Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted on average 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide;

(b) Worldwide, the percentage of peace agreements with gender equality provisions increased, from 14 to 22 per cent between 1995 and 2019;

(c) As at May 2020, 5.4 per cent of United Nations military personnel and 15.1 per cent of police personnel were women, compared with 3 and 10 per cent, respectively, in 2015;

(d) The United Nations has verified 102 women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists as having been killed in 26 conflict-affected countries between 2015 to 2019, which is likely an undercount; those incidents are expected to increase, due to the mobility restrictions and reductions in protective measures put into place to combat the pandemic;

(e) The representation of women in national parliaments has increased, from 13.1 per cent in 2000 to 24.9 per cent in 2020; in conflict-affected countries, the representation of women in parliaments remains lower, at 18.9 per cent;

(f) The share of women in national parliaments in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas is more than twice that of those without them (23 per cent and 10.8 per cent, respectively), and the share of women in local government bodies with quotas is 26 per cent – over three times higher than that for those without quotas;

(g) As at July 2020, 85 Member States (44 per cent of the United Nations membership) had translated the women and peace and security agenda into national action plans – an increase from 53 in 2015 and 19 in 2010 – but only 24 per cent included a budget for the implementation of those plans at the time of adoption; and 55 local action plans on women and peace and security have been adopted, in 16 countries;

(h) In the first five years after resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, only 15 per cent of Security Council resolutions included explicit references to women and peace and security issues; between 2017 and 2019, the proportion had risen to approximately 70 per cent;

(i) Total bilateral allocable aid committed to support gender equality efforts in fragile and conflict-affected countries continued to increase, with \$20.5 billion per year between 2017 and 2018, compared with \$18 billion per year between 2015 and 2016; however, bilateral aid to women's organizations has stagnated, at 0.2 per cent of total bilateral aid;

(j) In 2019, global military expenditure reached \$1.9 trillion, following the largest annual increase in a decade, but only 30 per cent of national action plans include disarmament as an area of focus (Secretary-General 2020, 3-4).

Moreover, the report mentions the areas which the previous report identified as being in need of further action, that is: the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and the implementation of the results; women's economic security and access to resources; protection and support for women human rights defenders and peacebuilders; increasing the number and strengthening the influence of women in peacekeeping missions and national security forces; financing for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda; and making UN leaders accountable for delivering on the commitments of the women and peace and security agenda, from meeting targets to improving analysis and messaging. Besides, the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by many women because of their race, ethnicity, ability, economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity and the structural barriers to their participation have not been taken enough into consideration (Secretary-General 2020, 4-5).

Furthermore, whilst the report recalls the intervention in front of the Security Council of the Sudanese student and activist Alaa Salah during the 2019 debate on WPS, who called for ending discriminatory laws and practices fuelling the cycle of instability and violence, of primary relevance is the call for a global ceasefire made by the Secretary-General on 23 March 2020, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering that “[s]upport for the inclusion of women is more important now than ever, as is the link between individual and international peace and security, which formed the core of the agenda 20 years ago”, the Secretary-General remarks that “[t]he participation of women is non-negotiable. More men must step up and do their part to break the cycle of exclusion”, especially in a general “context of shrinking physical, civic and political spaces” (Secretary-General 2020, 6). Additionally, the Secretary-General asserts that: “[a] multitrack approach that increases the number of women, integrates a gender equality perspective and is grounded in discussions with feminist and women's rights constituencies, including human rights defenders and peacebuilders, is critical”, thence he acknowledges that “numerical representation is only the first step. The symbolic, superficial, last-minute or ad hoc representation of women, without the real opportunity to influence the outcome of processes, cannot be considered enough or acceptable” (Secretary-General 2020, 7).

The report, then, observing that WPS is at the core of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, underlines the role of UNSCR 2538 (2020), the first resolution dealing only with the representation of women in peacekeeping and of the Elsie Initiative led by Canada, but it also highlights the need for “regular, participatory and meaningful” dialogue with civil society and for more research on the

relation between gender norms and conflict dynamics and on the impact of UN PKOs on women's lives (Secretary-General 2020, 11). In fact, “[p]reventing conflict and sustaining peace depends on addressing the root and structural causes of instability, such as exclusion, injustice, inequality and the spread of arms”, which is fundamental both for the realization of the SDGs and the WPS Agenda (Secretary-General 2020, 17)¹¹⁰. Further, seen that only 23 countries worldwide have a woman Head of State or Government, the Secretary-General stresses the necessity for political leadership by women¹¹¹, which is prevented by growing violence, whereas states should “promote and enable the full and meaningful participation of women in political and public spheres” (Secretary-General 2020, 21). Among the many challenges faced by women, looking at the threat of terrorism and violent extremism, the Secretary-General points out that:

Misogyny and the subjugation of women and girls are a common feature of most extremist and terrorist groups, regardless of their ideology. That is no coincidence. The strategic manipulation of gender norms and stereotypes is part of their narratives and their recruitment tactics. Controlling the lives of women and girls is not just a by-product of what they do; it is foundational to their purpose (Secretary-General 2020, 24).

On the other hand, it is paramount to consider that, since the first NAP adopted in 2005 by Denmark, 43 % of member states and observers (85) have a NAP as of June 2020, among them more than half have adopted two or more subsequent versions of them (but only 17 mention climate change). Additionally, Mexico, Sweden, Canada and France have announced or adopted feminist foreign and/or development policies and 10 Member States have proclaimed themselves Action for Peacekeeping WPS champions. According to the report, moreover, the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council could be a crucial tool to guarantee accountability on WPS, also more and more State party reports on the implementation of CEDAW make reference to the implementation of the WPS Agenda, especially after the adoption of GR 30 (2013). In May 2020, the WPS Focal Points Network discussed how to move forward this agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic and a compact for women and peace and security and humanitarian action has been launched as part of the Generation Equality Forum.

¹¹⁰ Particularly, in a recent report on the impact of arms transfers on human rights (A/HRC/44/29), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the use of arms related to specific expressions of masculinity, power and control that increase gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls. In addition, the 2020 WPS report asks countries to lead by example, for instance putting an end to global arms exports (Secretary-General 2020, 17-18).

¹¹¹ Accordingly, he urges Member States to consider the adoption of quotas and other temporary special measures to achieve gender balance at all levels of decision-making posts (Secretary-General 2020, 19).

The report therefore puts emphasis on the fact that while in 2017 women represented 21% of senior mission leadership, by August 2020 they were 41 % and in the current peacekeeping missions there are 10 gender units, 7 of which in the office of the head of the mission, as recommended in the 2015 global study, and all missions have either gender advisers or gender focal points (Secretary-General 2020, 28). Seven PKOs and special political missions had women protection advisers. Moreover, considering also that all senior leaders of PKOs and special political missions need to implement the WPS Agenda, in 2019, 10 peacekeeping missions reported for the first time on a set of 15 specific WPS indicators and 4 peacekeeping missions integrated mission-specific WPS indicators (Secretary-General 2020, 29). Still, the indicators identified in 2010 in the Secretary-General's report on WPS (S/2010/498, annex) need, ten years later, to be updated so as to include issues such as the climate crisis, pandemics, misogynist extremism, the growing power of private corporations and the role of new technologies, ensuring coherence with policy frameworks like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the sustaining peace resolutions, the youth, peace and security agenda, the agenda for disarmament, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and the outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (Secretary-General 2020, 33).

As the Secretary-General underlines:

“Bigger and bolder steps are needed to translate into reality the feminist vision for peace, grounded in positive peace and human security, that women peacebuilders laid out when crafting the building blocks for the women and peace and security agenda 20 years ago. The impact of COVID-19 in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings may be devastating, exacerbating deprivation, inequality and the feminization of poverty [...] Durable and transformative change also requires a re-examination of the global political economy”
(Secretary-General 2020, 30).

Therefore,

“[t]he COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for an international community that has already been challenged by rising nationalism and attacks on multilateralism and global norms. We face an urgent need to build more equal and inclusive societies. Either we lose hard-fought gains on women's rights, the Sustainable Development Goals and international security, or we emerge from the pandemic more equal, resilient and on the road to lasting and inclusive peace. Twenty years after transnational feminist movements successfully pushed for

resolution 1325 (2000), it is time to realize their transformative vision and build just and sustainable peace for all people based on inclusive power structures that underpin our economies, our political systems and peace processes” (Secretary-General 2020, 35-36).

As a matter of fact, “the full, equal and meaningful participation of women is a non-negotiable political priority for the United Nations” (Secretary-General 2020, 36), which, though, needs “a gender data revolution” on WPS (Secretary-General 2020, 37).

In the 2019 report on the WPS Agenda, the Secretary-General underlined that:

We still live in a world where women face exclusion from peace and political processes; where the number of attacks against women human rights defenders, humanitarians and peacebuilders continues to rise; where the attempted erosion of international human rights standards persists; and where xenophobia, racism, intolerance, homophobia, transphobia and violent misogyny continue to spread. We also continue to see high levels of conflict, violence and instability and are grappling with the imminent threat of climate change which, if unaddressed, will fuel further global insecurity and crises. Bold and urgent action is needed to ensure that next year’s twentieth anniversary of the women and peace and security agenda gives rise to concrete commitments and impactful action rather than empty rhetoric (Secretary-General 2019, 1)¹¹².

In addition, while recalling the need for data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability, and for such monitoring and reporting to be built into early warning signs of escalating conflict or instability, it stresses the necessity for examining “the impact of structural gender inequalities and discrimination, which inhibit women’s full, effective, equal and meaningful participation in political, economic and social life, as well as women’s full access to responsive justice and security institutions” (Secretary-General 2019, 12-13). In fact, the ability of the UN to respond to the challenges of ensuring women’s human rights and development on the ground is contingent on the consistency, quality and coherence of the gender analysis employed (Secretary-General 2019, 28).

¹¹² In this sense the report makes reference to the important initiative of Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland which in April 2019 invited Member States, regional organizations and UN entities to commit to specific actions on the WPS Agenda to be implemented by October 2020. In total, 64 Member States, eight United Nations entities and three regional organizations made commitments which are going to be monitored by UN-Women and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (Secretary-General 2019, 23).

Further, it is vital that such efforts prioritize the promotion of gender equality, women's political and economic empowerment and the substantive advancement of women's human rights, but also that they invest in young women's leadership so as to ensure a more inclusive future. In fact, also the 2019 report emphasizes that

“[c]ommitments to inclusive and participatory governance go beyond the number of women who participate, as gender balance alone in leadership roles will not produce a better quality of governance. Feminist approaches to governance that embrace inclusivity, social justice and the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights are central to these global goals” (Secretary-General 2019, 17).

In 2018 in his annual WPS report S/2018/900, UN Secretary-General requested an evaluation of the implementation of WPS recommendations from the three peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015 (Allen 2019, 2)¹¹³. According to this evaluation, two recommendations appeared to have gone backwards, namely the need for accountability by senior leadership and for gender provisions in peace agreements, while a suggestion which remained halted is that of ceasing the practice of inviting women to peace processes only with an observer status (Allen 2019, 9).

Indeed, in its 2018 report on WPS, the Secretary General communicated that only three out of 11 agreements signed in 2017 included gendered components, whilst in the previous two years the majority did, and he also questioned the quality of the existing gender provisions. For what regards the participation of women only with the status of observers, while already the Global Study condemned this practice as detrimental to real and effective participation, as stressed also in the 2015 Secretary-General's annual report on WPS, the 2018 Expert Group Meeting on Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements criticized this system as affecting women's civil society organizations. In fact, in 2017 the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) released a “Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies” asserting that observer status is not intended to be an engagement strategy, but rather a way for indirect participation when other strategies are not possible (Allen 2019, 10). As the Secretary-General (2018, 13) remarks:

Evidence continues to demonstrate that the inclusion of such provisions [on the role the role of the engagement of women in implementation] and the participation of women in peace processes directly relates to improved outcomes

¹¹³ While the three 2015 reviews utilised most commonly the term “gender-sensitive approaches”, it is currently more common to talk of “gender-responsive approaches” which underline the need to take concrete actions (Allen 2019, 2).

with regard to gender equality and to implementation of peace agreements, and also results in longer-lasting agreements.

Still, peace processes, including those lead by the UN in Yemen, Mali and Libya, continue to largely exclude women. In this sense, it is necessary to consider also the General Assembly resolution A/RES/71/56 adopted in 2016 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control which asserts that “the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is one of the essential factors for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security” (General Assembly 2016, 1),

In its **2010 report on WPS**, the first to be released, the Secretary-General, recalling that “the marginalization of women can delay or undermine the achievement of sustainable peace, security and reconciliation”, makes reference to UNSCR 1889 (2009) which requested to submit a set of indicators for use at the global level to track implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), to be used as a common basis for reporting (Secretary-General 2010, 1). Of these indicators, one third are qualitative and are mostly based on existing public documents, another third are quantitative and are derived mostly from specific reports and the remaining indicators draw information from existing systems such as the Millennium Development Goal database. The list of 26 indicators presented to the Security Council are listed on page 15-21 of the Secretary General’s Report (S/2010/498) and particularly in the annex, for instance under the goal “Provisions addressing the specific needs and issues of women and girls are included in early warning systems and conflict prevention mechanisms and their implementation is monitored”, number 7 asks to look at the “[n]umber and percentage of women in the executive leadership of relevant regional and sub-regional organizations involved in preventing conflict (regional and sub-regional organizations will include those identified in A/RES/55/285)” (Secretary-General 2010, 37) and under the goal “Increased representation and meaningful participation of women in United Nations and other international missions related to peace and security”, number 9 asks to look at the “[n]umber of women holding senior positions in UN field missions” and number 10 at the “[p]ercentage of field missions with senior level gender experts” (Secretary-General 2010, 38).

Having observed the discourses of the Secretary-General reports, it is possible to observe, as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security reported, that still they systematically depict women and girls as a monolithic group and are thus unable to understand the different challenges of different groups of women. Indeed, the NGO Working Group underlines that “[d]espite some progress, WPS is often tokenized and only addressed at the most superficial of levels”, denouncing that “[t]he continued ad-hoc and inconsistent implementation of the WPS Agenda over the last two decades by

the Security Council reflects a selective approach to WPS and a lack of accountability for meaningful implementation of the agenda”. A situation which is also strongly affected by the almost complete absence of rooted intersectional, gender-sensitive conflict analysis in reports of the Secretary-General to the Security-Council (NGOWG 2020, 3).

6.2.2 At the very core of the UN: unfolding the narratives

As de Jonge Oudraat and Brown (2020, 223) remind us “[i]nstitutions matter”, it is thus paramount to look at the very discourses which circulate within the UN Framework. First of all, the UN calls attention to the fact that

2020 is a year which marks significant benchmarks and anniversaries for the UN itself and for the gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda: 75 years since the creation of the UN; 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and 20 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (Lacroix 2020, 2)

Thus, it is fundamental to make certain that “women’s leadership, participation and protection remain central” (Lacroix 2020, 2), because “[g]ender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications” (UN Women undated b).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 2015, the UN published three comprehensive reviews on peace and security, including on peace operations, peacebuilding, and the implementation of the WPS Agenda:

-the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) which made a complete assessment of UN peace operations;

-the report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, which coined the term sustaining peace and promoted the adoption of the two identical resolutions on the “Review of the peacebuilding architecture”, also known as the “sustaining peace resolutions”, UNSCR 2282 (2016) and UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/304; these two “sustaining peace” resolutions, adopted in 2016 by the Security Council and General Assembly, affirm the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, considering also gender inequality, and for gender to be integrated across all peacebuilding work and underscore the importance of women’s leadership and participation and the continuing need to increase representation of women at all decision-making levels (Allen 2019, 3).

-the Global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.

Further, in 2019, an independent assessment of the three peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015, called “Mapping of the gender recommendations in the three 2015 peace and security reviews”, was carried out (UN Women undated a).

Under the clear heading “The challenge of sustaining peace”, the second review, the report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, declares that sustaining peace

is among the core tasks established for the Organization by the vision set out in the Charter of the United Nations of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It must be the principle that flows through all the Organization’s engagements, informing all its activities — before, during and after violent conflicts — rather than being marginalized. The human and financial costs of lapse and relapse into conflict have become intolerable and call for urgent resolution (UN 2015, 3).

Indeed, this review underlines the need for a broad and comprehensive understanding of sustaining peace, ranging from conflict prevention (which has gravely been marginalized by the UN), through peacemaking and peacekeeping, up to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction and which is based on uniting the peace and security, human rights and development pillars of the UN Organization (UN 2015, 3-4).

Moreover, after defining the Security Council as the main intergovernmental peacebuilding actor (UN 2015, 4), this review underlines how sustaining peace “fundamentally, concerns reconciliation and building a common vision of a society” (UN 2015, 5), still, it also acknowledges that “the key task under the Charter, that of sustaining peace, remains critically underrecognized, underprioritized and underresourced globally and within the United Nations system” (UN 2015, 9). A major issue is thought that “[s]ustaining peace should be understood as encompassing not only efforts to prevent relapse into conflict, but also efforts to prevent lapse into conflict in the first place” (UN 2015, 9), indeed, considering how “first and foremost peacebuilding must be understood as an inherently political process” (UN 2015, 13), there seems to be less and less interest for the BPfA engagement about reducing military expenditures, promote nonviolent forms of conflict resolution, and nurture a culture of peace.

In fact, the 2015 global study denounces a context of increased militarization (Coomaraswamy 2015, 134). Still, considering also that PKOs have ever more to deal with “environments where there is little

or no peace to keep”, it is essential to look at the fact that military forces, both national and international, along with armed groups will continue to play a major role in the peace and security agenda of the UN. Therefore, even if the WPS Agenda “has its roots in the pacifist, anti-militarist struggle”, it is required to discuss the participation of women in the military, which “raises awareness of women’s issues in theatres of action, helps prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population, and improves operational effectiveness” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 135)¹¹⁴. In this sense, the global study underlines “[t]he key role of female peacekeepers” by identifying them as “a critical factor contributing to mission success” who

broaden the range of skills and capacities among all categories of personnel, enhance the operational effectiveness of all tasks, and improve the mission’s image, accessibility and credibility vis-à-vis the local population. Women peacekeepers also improve targeted outreach to women in host communities. This is crucial for various reasons, including capitalizing on women’s familiarity with local protection strategies that affect women, and on their capacity to provide early warning,

but also “drive strong civil-military coordination, and together with civilian and police counterparts, can more effectively reach out to and interact with civilians in the host country, as they appear less threatening and more accessible to affected populations” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 141).

While stating that “women’s professional competence extends beyond these areas”, women are praised for the added value that they can bring to PKOs mission outcomes (Coomaraswamy 2015, 141) and thus Member States are encouraged to consider measures such as adopting a gender balance premium or the offering of in-kind benefits (Coomaraswamy 2015, 142). Similar arguments are utilised in order to depict the “positive impact” of women in the police component of missions (Coomaraswamy 2015, 143).

On the other hand, it is crucial to keep in mind this plain sentence:

for advocates of sustainable peace and security interlinked with development and human rights, the value of the women, peace and security agenda is its potential for transformation, rather than greater representation of women in existing paradigms of militarized response (Coomaraswamy 2015, 135).

¹¹⁴ Additionally, according to CEDAW women should have equal employment opportunities.

Thence, “gender sensitive innovations in peace operations designed to implement commitments on human rights, the protection of civilians, and women, peace and security” should become the “core business” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 144), because, as stressed by the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, “[t]he specific experience, rights, needs and roles of women and girls in conflict situations are often not included in preliminary analysis and assessments and thus do not feed into concrete strategies for the design of missions and the formulation of mandates” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 145). Moreover, the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations concluded that

Lasting peace is not achieved nor sustained by military and technical engagements but through political solutions [...]. The avoidance of war rather than its resolution should be at the center of national, regional, and international effort and investment [...]. Unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians (Coomaraswamy 2015, 150).

Taking into account that “women’s human rights and gender equality are central to the maintenance of international peace and security”, a major issue within the whole WPS Agenda, as seen so far, is data collection, which is actually not only a barrier to the evaluation of progress but also “a useful excuse for lack of action from less-supportive stakeholders” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 329). Furthermore, this scarcity of data is of major concern also considering that the UN is characterized by “grand pronouncements” (de Jonge Oudraat and Brown 2020, 244). Indeed, it is fundamental not only “talking the talk”, thus risking paying mere lip service to the overall and crucial commitment to gender equality, but also “walking the walk” (de Jonge Oudraat and Brown 2020, 259) by showing, for instance, actual and proper evidence to support this comprehensive effort.

The very UN website on peacekeeping (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>¹¹⁵) represents women in peacekeeping as “a key to peace” and it lists a long number of reasons to sustain this statement.

As a matter of fact, it asserts that:

More women in peacekeeping means more effective peacekeeping. Women peacekeepers improve overall peacekeeping performance, have greater access to communities, help in promoting human rights and the protection of civilians, and encourage women to become a meaningful part of peace and political processes.

¹¹⁵ As of 23/07/2022.

Improved operations and performance: Greater diversity and a broadened skillset means improved decision-making, planning and results, leading to greater operational effectiveness and performance.

Better access: Women peacekeepers can better access the population, including women and children - for example, by interviewing and supporting survivors of gender-based violence and violence against children - thereby generating critical information that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

Reflecting the communities we serve: Diversity in United Nations peacekeepers allows engagement with all members of the communities we are there to protect.

Building trust and confidence: Women peacekeepers are essential enablers to build trust and confidence with local communities and help improving access and support for local women, for example, by interacting with women in societies where women are prohibited from speaking to men.

Help prevent and reduce conflict and confrontation: Diversity in peacekeeping helps to address the disproportionately negative effect that conflict has on the livelihood of women and bring new perspectives and solutions to the table by effectively addressing the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict settings, including those of women ex-combatants and child soldiers during the process of demobilizing and reintegration into civilian life.

Inspiring and creating role models: Women peacekeepers serve as powerful mentors and role models for women and girls in post-conflict settings in the host community, setting examples for them to advocate for their own rights and pursue non-traditional careers.

While it is fundamental to consider that “[t]he prospects for promoting gender equality will depend to a large degree on the communication of narratives that will win the hearts and minds of people” (de Jonge Oudraat and Brown 2020, 261), so that they will become as well committed to gender equality, these “bold commitments” (de Jonge Oudraat and Brown 2020, 240) are often undermined by charges of essentialism, either naive or purposeful, as outlined in the previous chapter. Indeed, while starting with the clear statement that “[m]ore women in peacekeeping means more effective peacekeeping”, the UN website on peacekeeping, as quoted above, continues by making a list of 4 different reasons which are a foundation for their participation in peacekeeping, that is their role in

the promotion of human rights and the protection of civilians but also in accessing local communities and in supporting a “meaningful” participation of women in “peace and political processes”. Arguments outlined in better detail by means of six subsequent paragraphs which reinforce the previous claims expanding slightly the examples already mentioned while recurring to very clear and plain sentences in their syntactic construction, not supported though by any evidence.

Moreover, looking at the related documents and updates directly showed on the right side of the web page¹¹⁶, it is possible to observe how none of them displays any data related to the previously reported claims. The text entitled “Women transforming peace” seems to be quite promising in this regard, it does actually report the stories and voices of fifteen different women from Mali, South Sudan and the Central African Republic engaged in local and national peace processes in terms of personal accounts of their very relevant activities; similarly the document “Women transforming peace through peacekeeping” is an important policy brief which provides guidance to UN peacekeeping missions, member states and host governments, and the Security Council members on how to reach “women’s full, equal, and meaningful participation in peace processes and political solutions” (DPO 2020b, 1).

On the other hand, neither of these documents presents any data to explain why more women should be included. As reported by the former text, and as stated in identical terms also in the latter text, “[i]mplementation of WPS priorities is a political commitment in the Secretary General’s Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiative”¹¹⁷ (DPO 2020a, 2), still the reporting of some data is necessary in order to sustain and legitimize the whole WPS Agenda. Whereas the Department of Peace Operations stresses the role of grassroots and community level women’s organizations and leaders, underlining that they champion inclusive peace processes and ensure reconciliation through accountability or that the meaningful participation of women ex-combatants is the path to political legitimacy, this is illustrated only through the descriptions of specific personal stories. Accordingly, the second text, claims that in the previous report: “[t]he impact of diverse groups of women joining together, local women’s organization’s ability to prevent conflict, and the commitment of women leaders to pursuing accountability and reconciliation was evident across all settings” but it does not demonstrate such allegation and it continues by affirming that “[u]nleashing the power of women leaders and organizations to inform, influence, and transform peace processes is key to sustaining peace and security” (DPO 2020b, 1). Interestingly, this paper asks UN peacekeeping missions to “implement

¹¹⁶ As of 17 March 2022.

¹¹⁷ Which was launched in 2018 and it actually reiterates the importance of the WPS mandates, indeed it asks for ensuring full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes and for integrating a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting, together with the need to increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions.

and track implementation of WPS mandates with data driven approaches” (DPO 2020b, 1), an approach frequently overlooked by the UN itself in the construction of the overall agenda. On the other hand, in the policy brief “Women Transforming Peace in Peacekeeping Contexts”, it is asserted that mission mandates have been incrementally informed by data driven analysis, contributing to stronger internal accountability, coherence, coordination and ownership (DPO 2020c, 4). In fact, this policy brief is based on the UN Secretary- General’s Call to Action, asking “to embrace and build on feminist approaches to international peace and security and to enhance women’s leadership and full participation to transform peace and security” (DPO 2020c, 5) and at action C it requires to “Harness data and gender analysis for accountable decision-making”. Thus, it makes reference to the Secretary General’s Data Strategy (2020-2022) which asks for centralizing data driven approaches to close the gender data gaps and the digital divide (DPO 2020c, 8)¹¹⁸. In fact, this policy brief presents examples directly connected to MINUSMA and MINUSCA mandates, which include WPS as priority tasks while still maintaining the overarching integration of gender equality and WPS throughout the implementation of the mandates. Likewise, the UNIFIL mandate included WPS language and tasks, while UNFICYP and UNISFA mandates acknowledged the work of the missions with local level community driven women led efforts in peace and reconciliation. In this sense also the Security Council’s Informal Experts Group on WPS has been instrumental (DPO 2020c, 9). It also illustrates how in 2018 DPO developed a set of WPS accountability measures and tools: 15 core indicators, a dashboard, and qualitative quarterly reporting templates, additionally, through collaboration between strategic communications sections and Gender Units in headquarters and at the field level, it also invested in data driven story-telling and in context specific gendered conflict analysis, and in collaboration with regional organizations (EU and AU), UN Women and other UN entities, undertook joint analysis in several contexts in 2018/9 for example in Central African Republic, Haiti, Darfur and in Liberia 2018 (DPO 2020c, 11).

From the bottom to the top, the other documents are respectively a United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, which updates a previous one from 2010, published in 2019 and aimed at mainstreaming gender in areas such as risk education, victim assistance and community liaison. It is worth noting that at page 10, it is required to collect Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD),

¹¹⁸ As a matter of fact, this strategy starts with these words by António Guterres affirming that: “[m]aking better use of data – with approaches grounded in UN values and human rights – is integral to our future and service. Recognizing that we have not fully unlocked our data and analytics potential, this Strategy will guide us through a long-term transformation: So that everyone, everywhere nurtures data as a strategic asset for insight, impact and integrity – to better deliver on our mandates for people & planet. [...] Starkly and powerfully, the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates how critical data use, with a human face, is to protecting lives & livelihoods. The crisis is a wake-up call. We must accelerate a shift in our data and analytics abilities: To respond to COVID-19 and build back better, to drive the Decade of Action for the SDGs, to amplify climate action, to promote gender equality, to protect human rights, to advance peace and security, and to accelerate UN Reform – for greater impact on the ground” (UN 2020b, 3).

that is data split by sex and age into categories of women, girls, boys, and men. Moreover, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, everyone under the age of 18 is to be considered a child regardless of the local age of majority (UNMAS 2019).

There is then a brochure about “Gender Equality in Peacekeeping Operations” that opens by reporting the statement of the Under-Secretary-General at the Department of Peace Operations proclaiming that: “It’s a simple equation - women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacekeeping make our missions more effective and efficient” (DPO Gender Unit 2019, 1). It then proceeds by precisising that it “is well known that violent conflict disproportionately affects women and girls and exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination. Women are active agents of peace and participants in armed conflict” (DPO Gender Unit 2019, 2) and that “[t]he participation of women as peacekeepers, for example, contributes to the overall success of the mission by enhancing effectiveness, improving the mission’s image, access and credibility vis-a-vis the affected population, including by making UN peacekeepers more approachable to women” (DPO Gender Unit 2019, 3). All these statements are not backed by evidence. On the other hand, acknowledging that UN peacekeepers are the main actors in the UN system in order to implement WPS mandates and highlighting the guiding principles of “Inclusiveness, Non-discrimination, Gender Parity and Efficiency”, the leaflet critically recognizes that “[w]omen in conflict continue to be stereotyped as ‘vulnerable victims’ despite documented evidence of the critical role they play in peace and security” (DPO Gender Unit 2019, 4). Also in this case, though, the mentioned evidence is not shown.

The next text is a policy aimed at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support on how to operationalize gender equality and the WPS mandates which was adopted in 2018 in response to the evolving political landscape and nature of conflicts, as well as UNSCR 2242 (2015) and the HIPPO recommendations on gender-responsive peacekeeping operations (DPO 2020c, 7). Indeed, this policy is actually called “Gender responsive UN peacekeeping operations”. Even if it stresses that in order to reach the overarching goal of gender equality it is necessary to employ various strategies such as gender mainstreaming/gender integration, gender parity, and the prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), including Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), it focuses on the first method (DPKO and DFS 2018, 2-3). Explaining that it takes into account the review of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the High-Level Review of the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, this policy asks to produce analytical evidence-based progress reports (DPKO and DFS 2018, 4). It still requires that the reports of the Secretary-General

to the Security Council on peacekeeping are accompanied by “evidence based progress on the implementation of gender equality and the WPS mandates” and that “[r]eports in peacekeeping operations shall always include gender analysis utilizing qualitative and quantitative data, disaggregated by sex and age” (DPKO and DFS 2018, 6). Again, it demands that the initiatives taken, in this case in relation to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), need to be founded on gendered analysis and sex and age disaggregation of data, similarly asking that Mine Action initiatives, information, communication and technology (ICT) applications, systems and tools and the activities of Joint Operations Centres (JOCs) and Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs) should be based on the collection, analysis and utilization of sex and age disaggregated data and information (DPKO and DFS 2018, 8). Moreover, Protection of civilians (PoC) initiatives not only should be grounded on collection, analysis and utilization of sex and age disaggregated data but, interestingly, they also need to exhibit the intersectionality between gender and protection¹¹⁹.

The following document is a Policy Brief about “The Impact of COVID-19 on Women” which begins with the fundamental recognition that:

The year 2020, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality. Instead, with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic (UN 2020a, 2).

Having stressed how “COVID-19 is not only a challenge for global health systems, but also a test of our human spirit”, it continues by asserting that “Women will be the hardest hit by this pandemic but they will also be the backbone of recovery in communities” (UN 2020a, 2-3). Further, it stresses that there is widespread evidence which “demonstrates unquestioningly” (UN 2020a, 3) that policies which did not comprehend women are not only less effective but also potentially harmful, similarly evidence indicates that women will be impacted disproportionately and differently from men considering that overall they earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, especially in the informal economy and in the services sector, particularly affected by the pandemic (UN 2020a, 4). On the other hand, though, this policy provides various sources and much numerical data to support these

¹¹⁹ Indeed, gender responsive DDR and SSR require “shifting the perception of women as solely victims of armed conflict or subject of protection by the security forces, to recognizing them as decision makers, security officers, and change makers” (DPO 2020c, 18). For what concerns SSR, see also the report of the high-level roundtable on gender parity and security sector reform, available at: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/report_high_level_gof_gender_parity_march_2019.pdf

statements. Similarly, to the previous document, it also mentions the concept of intersectionality, pinpointing how women's health is affected by "multiple or intersecting inequalities, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, race, geographic location and sexual orientation" (UN 2020a, 10). Finally, it concludes demanding to "use this moment to rebuild more equal, inclusive and resilient societies" (UN 2020a, 21).

There is then a significant infographic on uniformed women in peace operations¹²⁰ and finally a link to an online photo exhibit called "Women in Peacekeeping: A Key to Peace" which at the moment (24/08/2022) it is not possible to actually see.

Similarly to what examined so far, in its website, UN Women asserts that "there is strong evidence suggesting that women's participation in peace processes contributes to longer, more resilient peace after conflict" (UN Women undated a), and while denouncing the habitual exclusion and invisibility of women in the very processes related to peace and security, it also describes its main contribution to advance women's meaningful participation in peace processes. In fact, the organization is represented as "well-positioned to respond, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, emerging from the current crisis on a path to lasting peace, justice, equality, and inclusion for all" (UN Women undated b). Given its 10th birthday in 2020, its contribution to "the global agenda that puts women and girls at the centre of peace and security" and the fact of being the only UN entity mandated directly by the UN Security Council, UN Women remarks how it "has substantially contributed to the United Nations' efforts to build peace and prevent conflicts"; still, while "[i]t is a moment to choose to rebuild better [...]. Always looking forward, UN Women today is leading the movement that aspires to make feminist peace a dominant shaper of global affairs in the twenty-first century" (UN Women 2020a, 6). In fact, "UN Women is a longstanding leader in shaping and acting on these commitments" (UN Women 2020a, 9), as stressed also by the Security Council.

In particular, UN Women hosts the secretariat of the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations¹²¹ and has a strategic partnership with the UN Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security (as

¹²⁰ Available at : https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed_women_in_pk_2022_stats_updated.pdf (accessed 24/08/2022).

¹²¹ The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations was launched in 2019 with the support of the broader Canadian Elsie Initiative, Member States, the UN system and peacekeeping experts in order to increase the numbers of trained and qualified uniformed women, both military and police, in UN peace operations, following the 2015 target of the Security Council to double the number of uniformed women in five years, and the targets of the 2018-2028 UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, in order to "achieve long-term positive and transformational change" (UN Women 2020a, 27).

chair), UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (as member), the Gender Working Group of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (as chair), the African Women Leaders Network (as co-facilitator with the Office of the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security), a partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office to coordinate the Secretary-General's 7-Point Action Plan, and the Global Focal Point on Rule of Law (as member) (UN Women 2020a, 15)¹²².

In addition, recalling the appeal for a global ceasefire by the UN Secretary-General, UN Women underlines that its focus is on “women’s participation and leadership” with the aim of “achieving peaceful, just, equal societies” (UN Women 2020a, 7) and “peaceful and inclusive societies, with gender equality as a central priority” (UN Women 2020a, 12). In order “to build back better, whether from conflict or the COVID-19 crisis”, it is necessary to work for “inclusive peace, security and development”, thus the participation of women is a *conditio-sine-qua-non* “for communities to become resilient to crisis and prevent future resurgences of conflict” (UN Women 2020a, 31).

Acknowledging that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development draws attention to the intrinsic connection between gender equality, sustainable development and peace, whereas UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace and security to the importance of engaging also young women and men in peace and security (UN Women 2020a, 12), additionally, UN Women underlines the importance of “gender responsive approaches to natural resource management for peace” (UN Women 2020a, 32) and “[g]ender transformative approaches to preventing violent extremism” (UN Women 2020a, 34). UN Women considers also the critical role of transitional justice towards sustaining peace and thus its commitment to develop a Justice Rapid Response (JRR) meant to help women reach truth, justice and “dignified and transformative reparations” (UN Women 2020a, 24), compliant with the UN Secretary-General’s Seven Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding, first adopted in 2011 (UN Women 2020a, 32). Unfortunately, acknowledging that “[w]ithout realizing the women, peace and security agenda in full, the world cannot make and sustain peace, much less achieve the SDGs”, the report underlines as major obstacles to its achievement the lack of adequate funding and

¹²² It is also fundamental to consider the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality (UN-SWAP). It “operationalizes the strategy included in the United Nations systemwide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which was endorsed in 2006 by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), into a framework for the United Nations system organizations” and “is intended to serve as an accountability and performance monitoring framework designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which to aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations system” (Kamioka and Cronin 2019, iii). The leading agency in its coordination is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Further in June 2019, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs’ (DPPA) adopted a new WPS Policy requiring that gender-related issues be integrated into all analytical, policy, mediation and programmatic work. See: https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/190604_dppa_wps_policy_-_final.pdf

evidence, whilst remarking the necessity of a holistic approach, multipronged strategies, multilateral cooperation and partnerships, and commitment at every level (UN Women 2020a, 38). Indeed, the report underlines that despite the fact that the COVID-19 crisis has pushed “dangerous xenophobic and nationalist narratives”, becoming “an existential threat to women peace actors” (UN Women 2020a, 42), it has also brought opportunities for new understanding and subsequent new actions, such as the creation of the new Global Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, announced on the 1st of July 2020 (UN Women 2020a, 44).

According to UN Women, “[g]ender is at the centre of United Nations peacekeeping more than ever before”, although the participation of women is still scarce (UN Women 2020a, 25), “[w]omen have a right to serve, and they also enhance operational effectiveness and improve support for women civilians. Less likely to use excessive force and more likely to build trust with communities, they make lasting contributions to dispute resolution, stability and the rule of law” (UN Women 2020a, 26). Similarly, according to the Global Study, although it is “openly or implicitly questioned and doubted, the body of empirical research illustrating the positive role of women’s participation only continues to grow” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 41), indeed “[p]eace processes that included women as witnesses, signatories, mediators, and/or negotiators demonstrated a 20% increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years. This increases over time, with a 35% increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 49). On the other hand, it is fundamental to adjust “the parameters of what we consider ‘political’, indeed women often have a leading role in sub-national and local mediation initiatives, which are very little recognized and supported (Coomaraswamy 2015, 54), thus it is pivotal to raise awareness among gatekeepers (Coomaraswamy 2015, 56).

In November 2018 UN Women organized a conference on women’s meaningful participation in peace processes, which recognized the need for “transformative and deeply inclusive approaches to deliver positive peace” (Allen 2019, 13), an outcome which can be reached only through “[s]trengthened gender analysis, gender expertise and resourcing” (Allen 2019, 14) as asked by all the three 2015 reviews. It is necessary still to recognize that

“[c]omprehensive gender analysis goes beyond the experiences of women, men, girls and boys, to also consider how power relations affect diverse women—factoring in their location, ethnicity, disabilities or sexual orientation—as well as how gender norms including traditional masculine identities may contribute to violence, insecurity and conflict or sustain gender inequalities. Importantly, undertaking comprehensive gender analysis does not detract from supporting

women's meaningful participation or promoting gender equality. Instead it ensures that the quality of the gender analysis informing all stages of peace processes and humanitarian responses is such that all gendered elements of a conflict or crisis are identified and addressed" (Allen 2019, 14-15).

In the context of an interview within the UN system¹²³, it was underlined the importance of the role played by UN Women, which is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, in relation to the WPS Agenda. Talking about the different courses organized, it was underlined that the apparently secondary aspect of creating relationships is not to be underestimated: women who participate in peacekeeping operations, or are going to, need to be supported. Further, the ELSIE Secretary is hosted by UN Women, which manages the application of countries for funding. Also, the countries that can apply for funding are the countries that are troop or police contributing countries or which are ready to be. The goal indeed is to increase the number of women who are deployed or in a pool to be deployed and also to understand which are the barriers to their deployment, so it is a work of barrier assessment. Thus, at UN Women they are trying to develop a plan to remove the barriers and contribute to the global discussion, turning the expectations into concrete projects in the actual countries armed forces. Though, according to the informants, in order to see the outcomes what counts more than the numbers is the culture. Further, together with the need for political backing, it was emphasized that in order to reach a gender perspective it is necessary to reach a critical mass of women (like for every other minority), which should be at least 25%, so as for the organizational culture to start changing. For what regards the strategy of the UN, they believe that it is based on very high recruitment targets, met by strong resistance, and that it shows mostly an internal focus which looks at the situation within the armed forces, on the other hand an internal and an external focus are complementary and both indispensable. As a matter of fact, being aware that states characterized by a high level of gender equality are quite stable, it is critical to have a comprehensive approach. According to them, a gender perspective consists of actually applying a gender lens to whatever you do, starting from the recruitment. It is a task where everyone is responsible, not just the gender advisor. In fact, they stress that we don't ask the men what do they bring to the organization, then why do we always ask for evidence about women? Still, they also recognize that the WPS Agenda is what we have and that it has the capability to be understood also by people outside of this system.

¹²³ During an interview held on the 9 of July 2020.

6.2.3 Full, equal and meaningful participation: taking a stance?

Let's take now a closer look at the concept of participation within the lexicon of the UN system.

On the 6 of March 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres affirmed during its speech on the International Women's Day: "I have said it before, and I will say it again: gender equality is a question of power. Men have used and abused power to control women and prevent them from achieving their potential for millennia", moreover he underlined how "[y]oung women are redefining what power looks like. They are creating new, inclusive forms of leadership that unite people across borders and around common goals", thus mentioning the known terms "women's leadership and full participation", he added that "[w]omen's stories matter. Representation matters. As Simone de Beauvoir said: "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men: they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth" (Guterres 2020). Finally, he concluded by stressing that: "We must push back against the pushback. That is why I am a proud feminist. Only through the equal participation of women can we benefit from the intelligence, experience and insights of all of humanity" (Guterres 2020).

In fact, "[f]ull, equal and meaningful participation means direct, substantive, and formal inclusion of diverse women in positions of power so that they can influence the outcome of negotiations and other processes as well as their implementation" and needs to be "systematic, timely and transparent, and not limited only to peace negotiations, but inclusive of monitoring of agreements, political processes, constitution building, economic development, transitional justice and reconstruction, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR)" and focus on "direct, formal participation of women in leadership roles and decision-making structures and processes" (NGOWG 2020, 12). In fact, "[s]ymbolic, superficial, advisory, last-minute, informal or ad hoc representation through advisory boards or other observer status must never be presented as substitutes for direct participation" (NGOWG 2020, 13).

Particularly important is that, as seen, on the 23 of March 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres publicly appealed for a global cease-fire during the pandemic, whilst the Security Council took over three months to adopt a conforming resolution, which demands the "full and meaningful participation of women... in the development and implementation of an adequate response to the pandemic." Considering that "peace and durable recovery are impossible without women's participation", conscious leadership is needed to ensure their participation (Rahmaty and Jaghab 2020, 9). In fact,

[w]e cannot achieve sustainable peace without the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of diverse women in all levels of decision-making.[...] In addition, although parity in representation is an important first step in addressing gender inequality, it is not the fulfilment of feminist leadership, nor is it a substitute for fully implementing all components of the WPS Agenda. Ensuring meaningful participation also requires dismantling the barriers to participation for the majority of women

and thus, acquiring an intersectional approach is necessary, whilst women are usually portrayed as a monolithic group at the Security Council (NGOWG 2020, 5).

In this sense, an outstanding initiative within the context of the UN system, which has already been mentioned, is the Elsie Initiative, named after Elizabeth ‘Elsie’ Muriel Gregory MacGill (1905 – 1980), the world’s first woman to earn a degree in aeronautical engineering and an advocate for women’s rights. This programme was launched in 2017 at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the same year that the country adopted its Feminist International Assistance Policy. In fact, then Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freedland stated: “Canada will always stand up for human rights – very much including women’s rights – even when speaking up has consequences” (Karim et al. 2020, 7). This is a five-year international project directed at “transformational change regarding women’s meaningful participation in peace operations” (Karim et al. 2020, 12), which includes components such as the Elsie Initiative Trust Fund, political advocacy, innovative research, and several bilateral and multilateral partnerships and various partners such as the UN and member states. Indeed, according to François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada until 2021: "Investing in women in peace operations is more important now than ever before. In these challenging times, we see the benefits of diversity within the personnel who make up UN peace operations, as this is a key factor in making them more effective and situationally aware" (Champagne 2020)¹²⁴.

It defines ‘meaningful participation’ as:

“Meaningful participation is demonstrated by the presence and leadership of women in UN peace operations, across all ranks and functions. Women are able to participate meaningfully when they contribute to, and are included in, all

¹²⁴ In the words of the very minister: “Canada is proud to have a feminist foreign policy, not because it looks good, but because it produces tangible and measurable results. I witnessed it first hand during my recent visit to Mali and across Africa. It is not a question of strengthening the power of women, they are already strong; it is a question of removing the obstacles to their full emancipation, to their leadership” (Champagne 2020).

aspects of operational and mission planning, and decision-making processes; when they hold operational command and leadership positions, and non-traditional as well as non-stereotypical roles; when they have access to the same training, promotion and career advancement opportunities as their colleagues who are men; when they hold positions that are in line with their training, rank and area of expertise; and when their workplace is free from all forms of harassment, bullying and intimidation” (Government of Canada 2021).

In the context of the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations a baseline study was released in 2018 in order to describe the current situation as it concerns women’s participation in military and police roles in UN PKOs, to document international good practice and to identify challenges and barriers to recruitment, training, retention, deployment and promotion of uniformed women in PKOs. The Baseline Study mentions as specific arguments for increasing the participation of uniformed women: operational effectiveness (reaching civilians, reducing negative effects of PKOs, legitimacy of PKOs), peacekeeping operation’s capacity to support the implementation of the provisions of the WPS Agenda, women’s equal right to serve. Particularly important is the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) barrier assessment methodology, published in 2020 by the DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and developed in partnership with Cornell University and eight research institutions in order to assess the prevalence of ten institutional and cultural barriers to women’s meaningful participation in UN PKOs. This study was piloted in eight countries (Bangladesh, Ghana, Jordan, Mongolia, Norway, Senegal, Uruguay and Zambia). Considering that women have been historically severely underrepresented in peace operations and that they usually occupy stereotypical roles, usually caregiving roles, an interviewee from the civil society¹²⁵ underlined the need to have enough deployable women to begin with. Further, on the 28 of March 2019, UN Women in partnership with the Government of Canada, the office of the UN Secretary-General, the UN Department of Peace Operations and the UN Development Programme’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office launched the Elsie Initiative Fund, designed for a period of five years but renewable. The interviewee expressed the belief that to have more women is the right thing to do but that it is also necessary to provide the evidence required. The idea is to see for each context which barriers, of the tenth emerged from the Baseline Study, are more relevant and to provide recommendations on how to overcome them, while also providing examples of good practices. At the time of the interview, the data collection was completed in one of the pilot countries (Ghana). In each of these countries the research was carried out together with a domestic research institution, also in

¹²⁵ During an interview held on the 23 of June 2020.

order to adapt the survey to the specific country and to have a vocabulary socially and culturally appropriate. In fact, there is an imperative to contextualize the instrument. The Baseline Study, released by DCAF in 2008, was mostly based on literature review and only seven people were interviewed. It was a state of knowledge, not new research, and it was elaborated in order to find out barriers and anecdotal evidence, so that is the reason why this new research is required, it needs to debunk myths and find actual causality links. The Baseline Study was a starting point. Moreover, security needs to be seen from a human security angle, it is not just an absence of violence, there is the necessity of an intersectional approach. This understanding, to see security not just as the end of conflict but beyond it, is increasingly also the focus of the UN. The interviewee is persuaded that a gender mainstreaming perspective needs to be integrated everywhere because nothing is neutral, representation is important but not enough, it is not possible to focus only on numbers, in fact the numbers do not mean equality. Also, according to the interviewee, it is very important that the WPS Agenda exists, it is an entry point to have the conversation that we want to have and also an advantage for advocacy to get funding, it opens spaces for discussions that did not exist before. Still, the Agenda has been pulled in many ways and has also been misunderstood with a focus put on protection rather than participation.

In particular, the MOWIP methodology looks at five key factors, namely: Needs, Access, Participation, Resources, and Impact (NAPRI), and ten issue areas: 1. Eligible pool, 2. Deployment criteria, 3. Deployment selection, 4. Household constraints, 5. Peace operations infrastructure, 6. Peace operations experiences, 7. Career value, 9. Gender roles, 10. Social exclusion.

The UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy (2018–2028) recognizes women’s meaningful participation as essential to improving performance, having better access to the local population, acquiring legitimacy and offering role models for the women and girls in conflict settings. Still, the report points out “that increasing the number of uniformed women in peace operations is not the goal as such. Rather, it is a prerequisite to furthering gender equality and women’s empowerment” (Karim et al. 2020, 22).

6.3 The NATO framework

As already observed, regional organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU), are increasingly implementing UNSCR 1325 and adopting gender perspectives into their security policies (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneicker 2018, 1). In particular

Woodward (2003) recognized the existence of “velvet triangles”¹²⁶ in the EU’s internal affairs, comprising different feminist actors coming from state institutions of member states or the organisation itself, from civil society or other external expert groups and working for gender mainstreaming within the organization; similar networks have been fundamental also in raising gender awareness within the security policies of regional organisations, such as the EU and NATO (Wright 2016, Joachim et al. 2017). Still, the development of an actual feminist “velvet triangle” and gender mainstreaming was long hindered as much in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy as in NATO (Guerrina and Wright 2016, Kronsell 2016, Wright 2016).

Still, NATO has established the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme in 1958, which has supported different research and training projects related to WPS. Further, it works closely with the UN, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on the WPS Agenda, In this sense, it is particularly important the Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 (RAR) framework which is a joint platform for NATO, the AU, EU and UN to share experience on WPS (Von Hlatky 2019a, 365-366). In general, NATO shows a complex gender architecture (focal points, advisors, a dedicated task force) and a Civil Society Advisory Panel is in place since 2016, as a channel for dialogue and civil society feedback on the implementation of the WPS Agenda (Del Turco 2020, 32).

In 2007 NATO adopted its first official policy on the WPS Agenda, the NATO/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) policy for implementing UNSCR 1325, which focused on the application of gender perspectives in operational contexts. A first Action Plan to support the implementation of this Policy, updated several times, was approved at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. A new NATO/EAPC policy and action plan was adopted on WPS was adopted in July 2018. The last Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security was adopted in October 2021 for the period 2021-2025. Additionally, in 2019, NATO adopted its first policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in support of its work on WPS, which reflects the core NATO values of “individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law” (NATO 2020e). As a matter of fact, the NATO Code of Conduct requires all NATO staff to act with integrity, loyalty, accountability, impartiality and professionalism, in view of the principle “do no harm”, and the organization has a comprehensive zero tolerance approach to all acts of SEA which matches with the approach of the UN, of which all allies are part (NATO 2020e). Yet, within this institution it is

¹²⁶ Representing the interactions between diverse actors such as policy makers and politicians, feminist academics and experts, femocrats, civil society, and the women's movement and which can strengthen the impact of interest representation (Holli 2008; Woodward 2003).

possible to observe different understandings of gender from representation goals to the integration of gender into daily activities (Hardt and von Hlatky 2017).

In 2007 NATO started publishing annual country reports on women in the military, compiled by the IMS (International Military Staff) Office of the GENAD (Gender Advisor), which showed a low gender awareness within the organization (Lackenbauer and Langlais 2013) and focused only on a limited aspect of the whole WPS Agenda (Carreiras 2006; Figueroa and Palomo 2015). Still, these reports are quite detailed considering that they collect not only data on national contributions to NATO missions, but also to UN and EU missions, as well as national insights (Ghittoni, Lehouck and Watson 2018, 10).

One of NATO's most remarkable achievements in implementing UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions is the institutionalization of the agenda in its organization. In fact, in 2009, NATO's two Strategic Commands—Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation—issued a Directive (BI-SC Directive 40-1) on integrating UNSCR 1325 and the gender perspective into the NATO command structure. The Directive was updated in 2012, 2017 and 2021. Further, within this institution, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security has the role of high-level focal point for the organization. This function was created in 2012 and made permanent in 2014, initially it was held by Mari Skåre (2012-2014), then by Marriët Schuurman (2014-2017), by Clare Hutchinson (2017-2021), and currently by Irene Fellini¹²⁷. The Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security leads also the Women, Peace and Security Task Force. This is an internal task force with representatives from the International Staff, International Military Staff and the Strategic Commands which monitors the implementation of the WPS Action Plan. Further, there are gender advisors across NATO's military structures and in all operations and missions: the first were deployed in 2009 to NATO's Strategic Commands, as well as to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

Finally, NATO is characterized by the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP), supported by the IMS Office of the Gender Advisor (IMS GENAD), which advises the political and military leadership of the institution and its member states on gender-related issues and the implementation of the WPS Agenda, aiming at the “integration of gender as a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and military operations” (NATO 2021a). In addition, the

¹²⁷ Who was appointed on 9 November 2021, as can be read at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_188472.htm?fbclid=IwAR26_V7pnoYvucWGG-3LTNxLERV1vdnp10xVKTxK1wRCrYC8LvXKepP9iOs

Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, created in 2012 by the Nordic countries in order to implement the WPS Agenda into military peace support operations and which is hosted by Sweden, one of NATO's partners, in February 2013 was appointed as NATO's Department Head concerning gender. Looking at the civilian side, further, NATO established a Civil Society Advisory Panel in 2016, then renewed in 2019, which represents a meeting platform for women civil society organisations and NATO in order to discuss policy and practice.

Within the context of the IMS¹²⁸, it was remarked that a very important tool that NATO utilizes to collect data is the Summary of National Reports on Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces, which are submitted by member and partner nations¹²⁹. In particular, the head of the Gender Advisor Office reports directly to the Director General of the International Military Staff and provides information and advice on gender issues, including the effective implementation of the WPS UNSCRs. Further, this office works also as secretariat for the NCGP in its work for promoting gender mainstreaming and operational effectiveness, in collaboration with international organizations and member states. Since the job in the IMS is mostly at the strategic level, they work especially at the policy level. Still pushing gender and WPS is challenging, in fact some nations are quite advanced in this process while others are really at the beginning, thus there are a lot of differences among different states, looking both at recruitment and retention.

6.3.1 Within NATO: internal practices and gender perspectives

On the official NATO webpage about the WPS Agenda, last updated in September 2021, it is clearly stated that “NATO recognises the disproportionate impact that conflict has on women and girls, the vital roles women play in peace and security, and the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in all that the Alliance does”, particularly it stresses that “NATO's approach to the Women, Peace and Security agenda is framed around the principles of integration, inclusiveness and integrity” (NATO 2021a). Three principles that are defined as follows in the NATO/EAPC WPS Policy and Action Plan 2018 (NATO/EAPC 2018, 11):

“Integration: gender equality must be considered as an integral part of NATO policies, programmes and projects guided by effective gender mainstreaming

¹²⁸ During an interview held on the 27 of February 2020.

¹²⁹ According to the 2017 summaries women active-duty military personnel in the armed forces were 11.1% in the NATO (4.9% in Italy, 7.1% in Denmark, 8.0% in Sweden, but interestingly 19.3% in Hungary).

practices. To achieve gender equality, it must be acknowledged that each policy, programme, and project affects both women and men”

“Inclusiveness: representation of women across NATO and in national forces is necessary to enhance operational effectiveness and success. NATO will seek to increase the participation of women in all tasks throughout the International Military Staff and International Staff at all levels, including in meetings, training opportunities, and public engagement”

“Integrity: systemic inequalities are addressed to ensure fair and equal treatment of women and men Alliance-wide. Accountability on all efforts to increase awareness and implementation of the WPS Agenda will be made a priority in accordance with international frameworks”

Further, NATO draws attention to its work in integrating gender perspectives across its three core tasks, namely collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security, and throughout its political and military structures. In fact, it stresses that gender equality is crucial in its cooperation with other international organisations such as the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN), but also with civil society.

Observing directly the text of the NATO/EAPC Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan 2018, it is possible to observe how it starts by stating that UNSCR 1325 “addressed the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. It highlighted the importance of the ‘missing’ elements of peace and security, primarily asking ‘where are the women?’”, stressing immediately after how in developing this last policy “our determination is strong, and our desire to push the agenda forward is collective” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 3). The document continues by underlying “the essential influence that women have in identifying solutions based on their unique experiences” which “can change the dynamic around peace and security” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 7). Then the policy underlines that “the integration of gender and the inclusion of women’s voices in all aspects of NATO’s work is an essential factor in the success of peace and security”, highlighting the aforementioned

3 I’s: Integration- making sure that gender equality is considered as an integral part of NATO policies, programmes and projects guided by effective gender mainstreaming practices; Inclusiveness- promoting an increased representation of women across NATO and in national forces to enhance operational effectiveness and success; and Integrity- enhancing accountability with the intent

to increase awareness and implementation of the WPS Agenda in accordance with international frameworks (NATO/EAPC 2018, 7).

The policy stresses that “women’s participation in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict situations is critical for the restoration of lasting peace” and puts emphasis on “the importance of ensuring women’s active and meaningful participation” into all peace and security efforts, considering that UNSCR 1325 should represent “a shift in thinking about women and the role of women in fostering peace and engaging in security” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 10). Moreover, this policy underscores that the commitment to the WPS, together with the commitment to the Protection of Civilians, and Children and Armed Conflict, are part of “the holistic approach to human security across NATO” and “is fundamental to the realisation of NATO’s common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 10). It then proceeds by recalling the importance of national initiatives, in particular NAPs, in this common effort, and “the importance of increasing the number of women in the International Staff and International Military Staff” and at all levels, including in decision-making and leadership roles (NATO/EAPC 2018, 13). Further, mentioning “both the participation and the protection needs of women and girls”, it addresses the issue of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, but also sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment and sexual harassment (NATO/EAPC 2018, 13-14). It also underlines the need for a robust data collection, which should be disaggregated by sex, and an analysis, monitoring and reporting on WPS results according to agreed indicators for progress (NATO/EAPC 2018, 15). For what regards the NATO/EAPC Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security 2018, it is important to consider that while the first NATO/EAPC Action Plan to support the NATO/EAPC Policy on the WPS Agenda was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010, it has then been revised on a biannual basis since 2014. Further, the policy asserts that by December 2018 an Implementation Plan will be drafted to better operationalize the Action Plan itself (NATO/EAPC 2018, 18).

Looking at the principle of integration, under the Outcome 1.3: Strengthened Civil Society/NATO cooperation through regular engagement with the Civil Society Advisory Panel (CSAP), among the different recommended actions, the plan demands: “Research on women’s perceptions of defence and security, with the engagement of CSAP, aiming to enhance understanding of societal factors shaping women’s perceptions of security, their needs, and their views of NATO” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 20). The Outcome 1.7, named Gender Perspectives are included in Defence Planning Process, asks to “Continue to collect and strengthen data to include in the annual ‘Summary of National Reports of

NATO Member and Partner Nations’ to encourage the exchange of best practice on recruitment and retention efforts for women in the military” (NATO/ EAPC 2018, 22).

The principle of inclusiveness, specifically at the Outcome 2.1: Greater gender balance is in place across NATO, asks to: “Map the obstacles and implement activities to increase the number of women in NATO, especially in leadership roles” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 23), but it also requires developing and supporting a consistent gendered language across NATO (NAO/EAPC 2018, 25). Finally, it concludes declaring that “[t]he Secretary General of NATO will continue to provide information on the implementation of the WPS Action Plan in the annual report” (NATO/EAPC 2018, 25).

In the context of NATO, it is also fundamental to observe how partner states Sweden and Austria were particularly influential in drawing attention to the WPS Agenda; in fact, Sweden had experience operationalizing UNSCR 1325 for the military context, and Austria with organizational implementation after championing the issue in the context of the EU. For instance, they set up an ad hoc group, “Friends of 1325,” where they coordinated their national strategies in order to maximize impact on the Alliance ahead of key meetings. Indeed, the proposal for a NATO policy on 1325 was actually first heard in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). As observed above, in 2009, NATO’s two strategic commands, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), adopted their own strategy for military implementation: the Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 on Implementing UNSCR 1325 (Bi SC Directive 40-1). This directive sets out NATO’s plans to incorporate gender guidance into all military structures and processes. Considering all these actions, we can reflect on the fact that NATO has developed a reputation as a WPS “enabler” (Aronsson 2021, 8).

6.3.2 Within NATO: more and less official narratives

In the Brussels Summit Declaration, which was released by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels in 2018, the adopted text states:

We are determined to protect and defend our indivisible security, our freedom, and our common values, including individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. We will continue to stand together and act together, on the basis of solidarity, shared purpose, and fair burden-sharing (NATO 2018a, 1)

moreover, the declaration points up that “NATO leads by example in upholding the principles of democracy and human rights; doing so increases our operational effectiveness” (NATO 2018a, 21-22), indeed, “NATO and its partners are committed to showing the leadership required to promote the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent WPS resolutions”, in order not only to

improve effectiveness but also to “contribute to a more modern, agile, ready, and responsive Alliance” (NATO 2018a, 22). In the Wales Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales in 2014, there is a similar commitment “to ensuring women's full and active participation in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, as well as in post-conflict efforts and cooperation” (NATO 2014, para. 90).

As a matter of fact, in 2017 in an article entitled “Why Nato must defend women's rights”, Jens Stoltenberg, the 13th secretary general of NATO since 2014, and Angelina Jolie affirmed: “The Nato Alliance was founded to safeguard not just the security but also the freedom of its peoples: in the words of President Harry Truman, as ‘a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression’”. After using the well-known references to the two conjoined concepts of “women’s protection and participation” and “women and girls”, they proceed denouncing that: “It is humanity’s shame that violence against women, whether in peaceful societies or during times of war, has been universally regarded as a lesser crime. There is finally hope that we can change this. We owe it to ourselves – men and women alike – and to future generations” (The Guardian 2017).

In an essay series published on the 31st of October 2020, on the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, by the Office of the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security and called “Women, Peace and Transforming Security: Visions of the Future of Women, Peace and Security for NATO”, Clare Hutchinson, previous NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, affirms that: “It was a real struggle to move women’s rights from what was seen as its natural fit in development into the world of security and defence” (NATO 2020a, 4). In addition, she explains how the Civil Society Advisory Panel is supported by the ‘Women’s Defence Dialogues’, which is constituted by informal consultations with different women from Allied and partner nations on their understanding of security and defence. On the other hand, whereas she declares that: “[t]wo decades, ten resolutions, and thousands of women’s voices will agree that UNSCR 1325 is still very much relevant today”, she also asks “[c]an WPS bridge the divide between protection and participation, between the theoretical and practical? The essential and cosmetic? Civilian and military?”, reassuring though that “NATO will do its part”, aiming “to creating a lasting foundation for security for all” (NATO 2020a, 5)¹³⁰.

In a factsheet, likewise published on October 2020, by the Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section, with the title “Women, Peace and Security at NATO: Integration, Inclusiveness,

¹³⁰In an essays series released on the 8th of October 2019 and entitled “Resilience and Resolution”, Hasina Safi, then Afghan Minister of Information and Culture and a civil society and women rights activist, introduces the interesting term “womanity”, that she defines as “a word to show my commitment and support towards majority of women and as someone observing, what they go through, most of the times everywhere in the world” (NATO 2019, 54).

Integrity”, NATO announces how they are sharing their knowledge and expertise on gender-inclusiveness with others, for instance they have an established guidance on inclusive language, by means such as “[u]sing “Chair” instead of “Chairman”, “staffing” instead of “manning” or “work-hours” instead of “man-hours” which can lead to a cultural change within NATO and in its public perception (NATO 2020b, 2).

In an article of November 2018, Clare Hutchinson clarifies that UNSCR 1325 was a landmark in shifting gender equality from the realm of development to that of peace and security, so as not to treat anymore women “as helpless victims but, instead, recognised as active agents for peace and security”, indeed she argues that UNSCR 1325 “is about making the invisible, visible: it is about opening spaces and dislodging obstacles to women’s participation in the decisions around conflict and peace”, changing “the shape and narrative” and “ultimately reformat the dialogue around peace”. Indeed, she recognizes that “[c]onflict has many faces and peace has many masks. Just as women and men have many roles to play in conflict and securing peace”, especially considering that “[t]o recognise what is security, it is necessary to identify what is risk. Women’s exclusion from defining risk, and thus security, will lead inevitably to women’s marginalisation in defining peace. For women, peace is as not merely the absence of war but equality in participation – socially, economically and politically”, because “[u]ltimately this, the WPS Agenda, is about change, about transformation – and, as with any transformation, it is a difficult, hard won and unappreciated but so very essential to development of society and stabilisation of communities” (Hutchinson 2018).

In this sense, in 2015, Marriët Schuurman asserted: “UNSCR 1325 is the landmark “No Women, No Peace” resolution, which recognizes that there can be no sustainable peace without equal inclusion of women and men alike”. Mentioning the “rightful, active, and meaningful role” of women, she reaffirms how it is necessary also “to rethink how we protect peace and security at home, [...] how we safeguard a Europe at peace, whole and free”, a task for which she solicits the skill of creativity (Schuurman 2015).

In an article published in November 2020 with the headline: “NATO & WPS: How an unlikely pair became inseparable”, NATO underlines how “2020 is a big year for Women, Peace and Security”, as it is the twentieth anniversary of “One Resolution that started it all”. In fact, recognizing the role of that “landmark resolution” addressing finally “the overlooked and undervalued roles of women in the context of conflict and peace”, it acknowledges that NATO was not originally expected to play a major role in this agenda which “was born in the context of UN peace operations, and championed by women peace activists. But UNSCR 1325 changed the conversation around security and who should be involved”. As a matter of fact, already in the 1954 Annual Review Committee on National

Military Service, NATO looked at the role of servicewomen and from 1961 organised regular conferences on the topic, whilst in 1976, the Committee on Women in NATO Forces was formally established. It is, then, reported that military women within NATO are at the time of the publication making up 12% of Allied national forces, 41 % within the International Staff and 30 % of senior management roles. Indeed, the article points out that:

Recognizing the roles of women in peace and security should not be limited to women participating in peace processes. Women have a role to play across all aspects of work on peace and security. NATO is committed to creating inclusive environments that support women's full and meaningful participation.

Because:

At its core, UNSCR 1325 is about making the invisible, visible: it is about opening spaces and dislodging obstacles to women's participation in the decisions around conflict and peace (NATO 2020c).

As underlined in a recent report of the Atlantic Council, the WPS Agenda is “a set of emerging global gender norms and a global social movement with ambitious aims to transform gender power relationships all over the world in order to help ‘prevent conflict, transform justice, and secure peace’”, objectives clearly stated even in the title of the 2015 Global Study (Aronsson 2021, 3). In fact, implementing WPS is about recognizing the gendered nature of defence and security as much as becoming part of a “WPS community of practice”, to use an expression first introduced by Charlotte Isaksson at a recent event hosted by the Friends of Europe (Aronsson 2021, 3)¹³¹.

Still, feminist authors such as Cynthia Cockburn represented NATO as responsible for physical and structural violence, and for channelling resources away from education, health, and other building blocks of feminist peace, also Isaksson claims that the internal gender regime at NATO can still be described as “institutionalized hegemonic masculinity”. According to the same report, “[t]his means that, within NATO, a particular set of masculine norms and practices has come to dominate others, and that this division of labor has been institutionally supported and maintained over time” (Aronsson 2021, 5). In this sense, British scholar Katharine Wright displays how men’s voices and bodies continue to dominate NATO and labour inside NATO continues to be divided along gender lines, whilst NATO’s external actions are driven by “masculinist protectionist logic.” On the other hand,

¹³¹ See: “From conception to inclusion: 20 years into the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” Friends of Europe, July 2, 2020, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/from-conception-to-inclusion-20-years-into-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda>

though, seen that feminist scholarship is becoming more mainstream in political, also security actors such as NATO, are more attentive to gender dynamics and their implications for security and defence (Aronsson 2021, 5). As a matter of fact, “NATO can reinvent itself through political consultations, and in fact has already done so on multiple occasions”. Considering that at NATO Headquarters, decisions are made through consensus in committee structures, with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as the highest decision-making body, this “allows for new and counter-narratives to develop and gain traction, including those that challenge the status quo. As a result, NATO can be the “site for experimentation” on gender in defense and security, as well as a “teaching machine” for allies and partners, using a description first developed by Cynthia Enloe in 1983 and used also by Katharine Wright (Aronsson 2021, 5).

Still the report highlights that for what concerns the WPS Agenda “[s]ome officials saw it as being ‘all about jobs,’ or a ‘women’s issue,’ or a nice-to-have diversity policy that no one could be seen to openly oppose”, thus demonstrating their lack of understanding of the legal responsibility for states under the UN to implement UNSCR 1325, which is also among NATO’s primary interests as a defence and security organization. Disappointingly, “[t]his kind of misunderstanding reinforces, rather than challenges, the institutional organization that has empowered certain masculine voices and norms over others”, a situation which is worsened by the fact that NATO discussions about WPS mostly include women, reinforcing stereotypes and placing the burden of change on the small number of women within NATO, in particular those in leadership positions (Aronsson 2021, 12). Therefore, gender mainstreaming needs to start at the institutional level and to be paired with efforts to achieve better gender balance, in order to “ensure NATO’s future ability to act as a role model and as a positive change agent” (Aronsson 2021, 13). In fact, WPS should become part of the Alliance’s core political values. Not only “[i]mplementing WPS policies and action plans is a means to a stronger and more relevant political and military Alliance”, but also

[i]t will foster creativity, resilience, and strength by helping NATO think more creatively and comprehensively about the evolving security challenges, enhance the Alliance’s value and relevance to its publics, better understand the environments in which it operates and the potential impacts its policies and programs may have, and ensure strategic and operational effectiveness on the ground. More broadly, emphasizing the value of human dignity and security differentiates NATO from authoritarian rivals and terrorist groups, which are among the world’s human rights abusers (Aronsson 2021, 14, reporting NATO 2020d, 43).

It is crucial to work on “Leadership, Transparency, and Accountability”, considering the relevance of transparency between its civilian and military bodies, as a matter of fact “[t]here is a growing sense among some partners and in NATO Headquarters that the WPS Agenda is getting lost in translation between NATO’s civilian and military offices” (Aronsson 2021, 15). Looking also at the importance of the above mentioned recent adoption of NATO’s policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, it is necessary to consider that consultations with civil society about gender started more than a decade ago and were formalized by means of a WPS-focused Civil Society Advisory Panel (CSAP) in 2016, which is now in its second iteration and comprises fifteen different WPS-focused civil society members: five from allies, five from partners, and five from conflict affected countries (Aronsson 2021, 16). Finally, NATO should improve its methods of data collection, analysis, presentation, and dissemination (Aronsson 2021, 16), in fact “WPS can help build internal cohesion, increase resilience, and strengthen the foundations of peace” (Aronsson 2021, 18), thus supporting “NATO achieve its 2030 objectives: to stay strong militarily, strengthen itself politically, and expand its global reach” (Aronsson 2021, 20).

Clare Hutchinson¹³², Senior Gender Advisor at the UN for over a decade and at the time of the interview, in April 2020, NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, explained that gender equality is an integral part of NATO’s policies, programmes and projects. As a matter of fact, NATO works for the inclusion of women, also considering that women and men have different perceptions of security. As already observed NATO’s three essential core tasks are: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security in cooperation with other international organizations such as the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN), as well as civil society. In fact, as observed the NATO’s Civil Society Advisory Panel was established in 2016, it is an independent coalition of women’s rights experts developing recommendations on the integration of a gender perspective into NATO’s core tasks in liaison with women’s organizations in national settings. In this context, additionally, it is fundamental take account of the creation of the Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 (RAR), a framework which serves as a joint platform for NATO, the EU, OSCE, UN and AU for sharing best practices on WPS and whose inaugural meeting was hosted by Ireland in June 2018. Further, as observed, NATO is characterized by a Women, Peace and Security Task Force, made up of civilian and military staff across NATO and under the guidance of the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. There is also a gender advisor in the International Military Staff and an advisory Committee of experts, NATO Committee on Gender

¹³² During an interview held on the 16 of April 2020.

Perspectives, on the military side. On the 20 November 2019 NATO adopted also its first policy on preventing and responding to SEA¹³³. According to Ms Hutchinson, NATO's gender advisors make NATO more effective and improve security and stability, wherever the organization operates. In fact, women are key, while men focus on hard security, women consider human security. Thence, there are fundamental differences in perception, in the way of looking at the whole population. There is the need for an inclusive approach which considers the undervalued and underused contribution that women make. In fact, it is pivotal to consider the different perspectives on security between men and women. While the former subjects prioritize hard-core security, women understand also human security, namely that it is necessary to build trust in order to have the community on your side, that there is the necessity of gender advisors to reach out to the local population. Considering also the very peculiar nature of NATO, which is indeed a complex organization made up of a political and a military side, she explained that whilst in the military side they do gender, in the political side they develop the policies and then they work together in the elaboration of the action plans. For instance, taking into account human rights, whereas women's rights are a necessary component when looking at the protection of civilians, NATO is a defence organization with a very different role than the UN. It is an alliance organization made up of allied countries, where the policies belong to the member states. Thus, doing gender in the UN can be somehow easier because it is not necessary to reach an agreement with the single nations, also they do not have to implement it. She believes, though, that the gender approach is the same within these two organizations, that is the principle to mainstream gender. Still, NATO's tasks are purely military and it has less of a focus on increasing the number of women in the military, in fact just because the number of women increases, it does not mean that the organization is more gender sensitive. Furthermore, it is not a women role, everybody has to do it, to bring about gender awareness. Remarking that the military role is the defence of the nation, that the military has to do its job, which is to be a fighting force, she also underlines that the military needs to have a variegated skillset, thence she remarks that NATO works a lot with Sweden, which is not a partner country but an ally which is doing an amazing job, especially for what regards the integration of LGBTIQ+ people.

¹³³ See: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_173038.htm (accessed 31/08/2022). Furthermore, on the 1st of June 2021 NATO endorsed its new policy on preventing and responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), see: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184487.htm (accessed 31/08/2022).

6.4 The EU framework

In December 2017, among the personnel mobilized by the EU women were only 5.9 per cent of the overall military personnel, 10.9 per cent of the police and 27.8 per cent of the international civilian personnel (Smit 2020). In fact, as Smit (2019b, 2) points out in relation to the commitment of the Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact¹³⁴, in November 2018, of increasing the number of female personnel at all levels in missions, to reach a major representation of women is a joint responsibility of member states, the EEAS and the European Commission (which have indeed developed a joint action plan to guide their contribution to the compact's implementation in 2019¹³⁵). In particular, women have remained chronically under-represented in civilian CSDP missions at almost all levels, even though the EU and most of its member states have been very supportive of the WPS Agenda (Smit 2020, 1)¹³⁶. On the other hand, considering that the EU is determined to have more women in its Common Security and Defence missions, this growth is mostly visible in its civilian personnel and it is strongly correlated to a parallel decrease in the number of men (Ghittoni, Lehouck and Watson 2018,10).

Within this context, it is also quite interesting to observe how the role of the gender advisor is always associated with that of human rights advisor, as pointed out in different interviews. In particular, in the context of the EUCAP SAHEL NIGER¹³⁷, which is a civilian mission of the EU directed at assisting Niger in the fight against terrorism and organized crime (part of the international missions of the EU CSDP aimed at contributing to international peace, stability and security), it was highlighted how there is a constant connection at the European level between human rights and gender. In fact, the EU goals in relation to gender are equal opportunities, prohibition of discrimination, women's rights, that is themes which are strongly connected to human rights as well, and to the main goals of the EU itself. Thus, human rights and gender are two cross-cutting issues, always based on the fundamental principle of do no harm. On the other hand, a Human Rights and Gender Advisor¹³⁸, working in the same framework, affirmed that the WPS Agenda is not directly mentioned in their work on the field, but that it is taken into account more broadly as an implicit

¹³⁴ The compact consists of 10 strategic guidelines and 22 political commitments that member states have agreed to implement by 2023 (Smit 2020, 1).

¹³⁵ Council of the European Union, Joint Action Plan Implementing the Civilian CSDP Compact, 8962/19, 30 Apr. 2019

¹³⁶ As of mid 2020, only Finland and Ireland had included targets in their national implementation plans (NIPs) for the proportion of women in their national contributions (50 per cent and 40 per cent respectively) (Smit 2020, 1-2). Still, a good initiative is for example the new European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management (COE), which is a German initiative and is Germany's flagship contribution to the Civilian CSDP Compact, and which has made it a key priority to contribute to better representation of women in civilian CSDP mission (Smit 2020, 3).

¹³⁷ During an interview held on the 16 of December 2019.

¹³⁸ During an interview held on the 21 of December 2019.

component of their work when they are addressing women's equality and conflict related sexual violence.

6.4.1 The EU and the WPS Agenda: a mosaic of actors

Within the EU institution, it is fundamental to consider the work of different actors (see EPLO undated).

In the European External Action Service (EEAS), it is imperative to look at the EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and on UNSCR 1325 (PAG), a role created in summer 2015 and occupied by Ambassador Mara Marinaki since September 2016 until the end of 2020, with the support of a Swedish National Seconded. While this position is currently vacant, the EU has announced a shift to the new title of principal advisor on gender and diversity (Plan International 2021). On 1st July 2021 Ms Stella Ronner-Grubačić was appointed as the Ambassador for Gender and Diversity at the European External Action Service (EEAS)¹³⁹. Still, looking at the piece of news about her appointment on the EEAS website there is no reference to the WPS Agenda (on the other hand there is focus on the requirement to lead by example especially by “establishing gender-responsive and gender-balanced leadership”). Indeed, the agenda is mentioned in the same web page but as a separate topic¹⁴⁰.

Particularly important is also the EU Informal Task Force on UNSCR 1325, created in 2009 and directed by the EEAS. It organizes meetings with EU officials from the European Commission and EU member states and NATO, UN Women, OSCE and civil society. Further, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which brings together ambassadors from EU Member states for discussing EU policies in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) areas, was briefed by the EEAS Principal Gender Adviser. It is pertinent also the activity of the Council Working Group on Human Rights (COHOM), where representatives from EU Member States engage with Human rights (including Women's and girls' rights), and of the United Nations Council Working Group (CONUN) which elaborates common EU policies concerning UN issues, including the UNSCR 1325. Indeed, the EU can be a strong role model but it “should be wary of raising unrealistic expectations on what it can” (EPLO 2017, 8-9), because to be a credible actor the EU needs to “practice what it preaches” (EPLO 2017, 9). Indeed, considering also the criticism of Lombardo and Meier (2006, 151), who observed that “gender mainstreaming has not

¹³⁹ See: Biographies of Moderators and Speakers (OSCE 2021, 13)

¹⁴⁰ See: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/410777_mk?s=215 (accessed 02/09/2022)

been effectively implemented in the EU”, and that EU documents were “gender-blind”(Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 107), in the context of the CSDP, gender mainstreaming was mainly the result of the work of external actors, who had, though, to adapt to the specific institutional settings of the CSDP (Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 112) Thence, a main message was that of “operational effectiveness”, supported by different gender entrepreneurs, such as Judy Batt and Johanna Valenius (2006, 3), who, yet, associated gender mainstreaming also to the promotion of human rights as observed also in the previous paragraph (Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 113). Moreover, the EU and UN Women¹⁴¹ adopted a memorandum of understanding in April 2012 in order “to mutually consolidate, develop and structure their cooperation in areas of common concern” (EU and UN Women 2012, 2 as mentioned in Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 115). Among civil society organizations, especially important has been the role of ISIS Europe (ISIS Europe - International Security Information Service) and EPLO (The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office) (Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 115).

Especially relevant has been also the role played by EU member states with strong domestic gender mainstreaming agendas and policies, for instance Sweden established the network Genderforce, a project initially founded by the European Social Fund in 2003 (Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 116), and countries such as Denmark and Finland have similarly championed gender mainstreaming within the EU (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000, 436). In fact, these three countries worked crucially for the appointment of the EEAS’s principal advisor on gender and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in late 2015, making reference also to the position already existing within the NATO institution (Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen 2017, 117).

6.4.2 Internal policies and discourses

Whereas in 2019 the European Union adopted its first regional action plan on the WPS Agenda, gender equality has been a central value for the EU, increasingly also in its external policy, for a long time. Already in 2005, the Council noted the document "Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the context of ESDP", which focused on practical measures for implementing this resolution in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), that is the former name of the EU CSDP, and on the general approach of the EU, complemented by a checklist finalised in 2006. In 2008 the EU revised and merged these documents in the “Implementation of UNSCR 1325 as reinforced by UNSCR 1820 in the context of ESDP”. In this document, the EU reminds that gender equality is a primary principle within the EU CFSP and that gender mainstreaming involves both men

¹⁴¹Joachim, Schneiker and Jenichen (2017, 119), underlining how overall the UN has been an important role model for the EU work in the area of CSDP, point out how it is “somewhat ironic”, considering the disapproval which many feminist scholars directed to the UN in relation to the way it implemented the WPS Agenda.

and women (15782/3/08 REV 3 2008). In the same year the EU adopted the policy “Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security” which reminds us that:

The European Union has a longstanding engagement to promote gender equality and women’s rights in its external policy. More specifically, commitments to promote the role of women in peace building and/or enhance the implementation of Resolution 1325 exist in several key policy documents, such as the 2005 European Consensus on Development, the 2006 Commission Communication Roadmap to Gender Equality, the 2006 EU Concept for support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), the Commission Communication on women’s empowerment and gender equality in development cooperation of March 2007 and the corresponding Council Conclusions of May 2007 (15671/1/08 REV 1)¹⁴²

Furthermore, acknowledging how women, men, girls and boys experience and live through peace and conflict differently, while contemporary conflicts affect more and more the civilian population, the policy, recognizes that women are not only victims but also have “active roles as combatants, peace builders, politicians and activists”. Thus, only the “equal participation of men and women” can bring to “a culture of inclusive and sustainable peace”. Reaffirming then how UNSCR 1325 calls for women’s equal and full participation as active agents, women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and for commitment in increasing the participation of women and incorporating gender perspectives (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 3), it explains how these efforts “can enhance efficiency and effectiveness”

¹⁴² It also mentions that the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid recognises the importance of supporting women’s participation in humanitarian aid responses and calls for the incorporation of protection strategies against sexual and gender-based violence in all aspects of humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, important commitments to the promotion of Resolution 1325 are included in the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and the first Action Plan (2008-2010) for its implementation” (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 21). “In the field of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the Council adopted an operational paper on ‘the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the context of ESDP’ in September 2005. The paper contains recommendations on integrating a gender perspective at all stages of ESDP missions/operations, from the planning to the reporting and lessons identified. Building on this paper, the Council developed a ‘check list’ which was adopted in July 2006; additionally, the Council adopted conclusions on ‘mainstreaming gender in ESDP’ in November 2006. Furthermore, in June 2008 the Council made public a ‘Compilation of Relevant documents’ on the mainstreaming of human rights and gender in ESDP with the objective to gather the documents that comprise the guiding principles for planners of EU missions/operations and to give examples of how these have been used in the actual planning documents of ESDP missions/operations. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 30 November 2000 on the participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution. In addition, in 2006 the Parliament issued a report on the situation of women in armed conflict situations and their role in the reconstruction and democratic process of post conflict countries” (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 22).

and bring to “the development of sustainable and inclusive approaches to peace and security”¹⁴³ (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 4). In fact, in order to achieve long term peace and development, it is necessary to start from a multidimensional concept of human security, accordingly the EU underlines that it will continue to monitor the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), especially in the area of “women and conflict” but also the Millennium development Goals, the European Consensus for development and the Common Foreign and Security Policy objectives (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 10). Further, the EU considers peace processes as opportunities to promote women’s empowerment, gender equality, gender mainstreaming¹⁴⁴ and respect for women’s rights within resulting peace agreements (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 14).

Thus, the EU set a precedent by being the first regional body to formally recognize UNSCR 1325 by means of its Comprehensive Approach on Women, Peace and Security. Still, as we observed in relation to the UN overall WPS Agenda, also the EU’s 2008 approach has been condemned for portraying women as victims of conflict instead of as “active participants of change”. However, in July 2010, the Council of the EU adopted its first set of indicators to monitor the implementation of the 2008 approach, then revised in 2015-2016, while a new set has been adopted in September 2016. The text of the “Revised indicators for the Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security” published in 2016, after a summary of the WPS resolutions adopted until that moment, starts by recalling the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, the importance of women’s equal and full participation as active agents, the need for women's participation during all stages of peace processes, but also the requisite of data on, analysis and systematic assessment of the particular needs of women (as expressly mentioned by UNSCR 1889 (2009) in terms of “baseline data and specific,

¹⁴³ Indeed, the 2008 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women highlighted the lack of systematic interaction between peace negotiators/mediators and women’s organisations and networks and deplored that women were only rarely selected as members of international teams leading peace negotiations. With regard to conflict prevention and early warning, research has shown that in a number of cases women either predicted the outbreak of violence or had access to vital information that may have stopped the outbreak of violence, but were unable to communicate to the relevant authorities (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 7).

¹⁴⁴ The document asserts that it defines gender mainstreaming according to the Council of Europe (CoE) as “gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. Gender mainstreaming cannot replace specific policies which aim to redress situations resulting from gender inequality. Specific gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming are dual and complementary strategies and must go hand in hand to reach the goal of gender equality”. Similarly, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as 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 (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 5).

measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound indicators to measure progress”) (12525/16 2016, 5). Indeed, the indicators were revised according to the four areas of

Prevention: mainstream a gender equality perspective into all conflict prevention activities and strategies, develop effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms and institutions, strengthen efforts to prevent violence against women, including various forms of gender-based violence, and fight against impunity on sexual and gender-based violence.

Participation: promote and support women’s active and meaningful participation in all peace processes, as well as their representation in formal and informal decision-making at all levels; improve partnership and networking with local and international women’s rights groups and organisations; recruit and appoint women to senior positions.

Protection: strengthen and amplify efforts to secure the safety, physical or mental health, wellbeing, economic security and/or dignity of women and girls; promote and safeguard human rights of women and mainstream a gender perspective into the legal and institutional reforms.

Relief and recovery: promote women’s equal access to aid distribution mechanisms and services, including those dealing with the specific needs of women and girls in all relief recovery efforts.

(12525/16 2016, 10-11).

Additionally, in 2018 a new comprehensive approach has been adopted, which “is more inclusive as it included knowledge from all sectors of society and also in conflict affected contexts, both when it comes to what is on paper and the consultation process that took place beforehand”. Indeed, “listening to a diversity of voices on the ground and conducting a proper gender analysis, the EU can ensure a culturally sensitive approach”, as opposed to the criticism that the WPS Agenda is characterized by a strictly western liberal feminist position on gender equality. Still, it is crucial to reflect on the fact that “[t]he EU always has to weigh the different voices on the ground, but that doesn’t mean that it has to support them [...] the EU can be culturally sensitive without diverging from universal human rights standards” (Grønning 2020). More specifically in its 2018 Strategic Approach to WPS, which needs the “political and diplomatic engagement of EU leadership, enabling women’s equitable and meaningful participation in all EU external action, not only on topics of women's rights, but all action

including on peace and security”, the EU recognizes gender equality¹⁴⁵ and women's empowerment as a prerequisite for dealing with the conflict cycle (prevention, management and resolution), and thus the necessity of “engaging, empowering, protecting, and supporting women and girls to achieve peace and security” (15086/18 2018, 6). This approach stresses not only the importance of women’s leadership and agency, but also “engages men and boys as positive agents for change, addressing the need to address and transform gender stereotypes and societal exclusion mechanisms”, while highlighting the universality of the WPS, its binding character to be implemented by all EU actors and all Member States, as well as in all interactions with non-EU countries (15086/18 2018, 7). In order to reach its objectives, the policy focuses on women’s leadership, rights and agency, as well as on the roles of women, men, girls and boys from diverse and variable backgrounds and all ages, thence it recognizes the requirement of examining the gendered root causes of conflict and supporting civil society organisations, including women’s groups and grassroots activists, whereas addressing gender equality comprehensively in the EU external action, including, but not limited to, development, preventing and countering violent extremism, counterterrorism and migration.

This new policy importantly asserts that “an exclusive focus on protection potentially reinforces the exclusive perception of women and girls as passive victims of conflict” (15086/18 2018, 16), thus “while emphasising women’s agency over victimhood as a first step to engaging meaningfully and equitably with women from fragile settings” (15086/18 2018, 18), “it is imperative to support their peacebuilding work and engage them as actors and agents for peace. However, women should not automatically be assumed to be peacemakers, as they play diverse roles in conflict and can also be combatants and perpetrators of violence” (15086/18 2018, 16). Thus, since women and girls “are entitled to equitably and substantially participate”, the EU

will promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights of all women and girls and will empower women and girls in accordance with its values and principles. This is an intrinsic component of peace, security, human rights and sustainable development, also in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its sustainable development goals (15086/18 2018, 17).

¹⁴⁵ Particularly, the EU promotes gender equality within and outside its borders in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality, according to the following five priority areas: (i) increasing female labour market participation and the equal economic independence of women and men; (ii) reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women; (iii) promoting equality between women and men in decision-making; (iv) combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; and (v) promoting gender equality and women’s rights across the world (15086/18 2018, 66).

In fact, the meaningful and equitable participation of women in decision-making will contribute to breaking the continuum of violence and discrimination against women and girls and vice versa (15086/18 2018, 24). In this sense, also conflict-related sexual violence needs to be understood “as part of a continuum of gender-based violence closely intertwined with persistent inequalities and broader attacks on gender equality and women’s human rights, including, but not limited to, digital and cyber violence” (15086/18 2018, 39). This approach, consequently, is committed to promote “positive, gender-equitable and non-violent masculinity, an essential step towards fostering peaceful and inclusive societies”, stressing the essential role of youth (15086/18 2018, 19) and the urgency of avoiding instrumentalization (15086/18 2018, 20). Moreover, this framework is rights-based, encompassing all human rights and at the same time it seeks to reach a needs-based approach to humanitarian aid. Considering “the EU’s leading role as a gender equality promoter and catalyst” (15086/18 2018, 24), it is required to “integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of conflict prevention and sustaining peace to reinforce context-specific, inclusive and participatory approaches”, still being aware of “the particular situations and specific priorities, capacities, needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls” (also in relation to sexual and reproductive healthcare services) (15086/18 2018, 26). This commitment demands “an interactive dialogue and mutual learning process” and “the systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data” (15086/18 2018, 27).

As a matter of fact, “[w]omen are often expected to speak with one voice, as if they were a homogeneous group” (15086/18 2018, 28), thus it is also crucial not only to support “the meaningful and equitable participation of women security (military/police)” (15086/18 2018, 29), but also to “counteract tendencies of shrinking space for civil society including women’s organisations, activists and human rights defenders” (15086/18 2018, 30). Additionally, preventive actions need to be likewise “rights-based (encompassing all human rights), people-centred and whole-of-society approaches that include citizen engagement”¹⁴⁶ (15086/18 2018, 31). In this sense it is especially important to promote “locally initiated and locally owned gender-responsive prevention activities” (15086/18 2018, 33), considering that for instance “[e]mpowering women as drivers of economic growth strengthens societal resilience” (15086/18 2018, 32) and that “[t]he equal participation of women and men is both an essential end and a way to prevent and resolve conflicts and promote a culture of inclusive and sustainable peace” (15086/18 2018, 34). Thus, also relief, recovery and

¹⁴⁶ The policy also acknowledges that “[c]limate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, desertification and drought are drivers of conflict which can particularly affect women as they are too often disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change” (15086/18 2018, 32).

reconstruction can be a singular opportunity “to transform discriminatory social structures and to promote women’s human rights, participation and meaningful engagement” (15086/18 2018, 40).

For what regards the connected EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019-2024, which complements and reinforces the existing EU Gender Action Plan for 2016-2020 (GAP II) (11031/19 2019, 3), it calls for an inclusive participation of EU citizens, civil society and academia (11031/19 2019, 6). In fact, “[w]omen and girls, together with men and boys, are all included and actively engaged in work and policies aiming for the implementation of the Strategic Approach” (11031/19 2019, 8) in order to reach women’s meaningful and equitable participation, for which it sets a target of a minimum of 33% women participating in all EU activities and projects related to peace processes (11031/19 2019, 7). At the same time, the document chooses to utilise the title ‘gender, peace and security’, “marking the clear intention to make sure that both men and women are concerned by the issues dealt with and to avoid the often-perceived misconception that the policy relates to women only” (11031/19 2019, 16). Overall, as Del Turco (2020, 32-33) underlines, the last EU WPS policy and action plan are characterized by a participatory approach including also civil society organizations.

Finally, in November 2020 the EU has adopted its third Gender Action Plan¹⁴⁷. This policy, entitled “EU Gender Action Plan (Gap) III- An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action”, begins by recognizing that

[g]ender equality is a core value of the EU and a universally recognised human right, as well as an imperative to well-being, economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace and security. All people, in all their diversity, should be free to live their chosen life, thrive socially and economically, participate and take a lead as equals. The EU is a global front-runner in promoting gender equality as a key political objective of its external action and common foreign and security policy, aimed at accelerating progress towards global goals including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) at the core of the 2030 Agenda. The EU pursues a three-pronged approach, combining gender mainstreaming, targeted actions and political dialogue (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 2).

¹⁴⁷ Considering also that the European Commission, alongside some EU Member States, is part of the Generation Equality Forum, a global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the Mexican and French governments, in partnership with civil society, the private sector and international organisations (SWD(2020) 284 final 2020, 9)

Underlying how “challenges also bring opportunities”, and thence the post-COVID-19 recovery must be an opportunity to address structural inequalities and build more inclusive societies, the text explains that

[d]rawing from the EU gender equality strategy 2020 - 2025, which calls for a gender-equal Europe, this new EU gender action plan for 2021–2025 (GAP III) calls for a gender-equal world and is complementary to the LGBTIQ equality strategy for 2020-2025. It will scale up the EU contribution to reach SDG 5 in all EU internal and external policy areas and across the 2030 Agenda (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 2).

Thus, the policy displays a policy framework for the EU which needs to be based on “a gender-transformative, rights-based and intersectional approach” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 3)¹⁴⁸.

Considering that SDG 5 is one of the three least financed SDGs globally, the EU has made a commitment that at least 85% of all new external actions will have gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment as a significant objective or as a principal objective by 2025. Building on the progress of the EU GAP II this share steadily increased from around 58% in 2016 to 65% in 2019. The EU is now determined to reach the 85% target by 2025. In this perspective, the design of all external EU-funded programmes will apply three minimum standards:

1. conducting and using updated gender analyses to inform decision-making on future action and integrating these into all relevant dialogues, policies, strategies, programmes and operations;

¹⁴⁸ As better explained in the section: “Tackling the root causes of gender inequality: three core principles”: “• Take a gender-transformative approach. This means examining, questioning, and changing rigid gender norms and imbalances of power which disadvantage women and girls and generate discriminations at all ages, starting from early childhood, in societies. This means the EU promoting change in social attitudes, including by actively engaging men and boys and by putting a focus on young people as drivers of change. To work in a way that is context-sensitive, it is essential to forge strong partnerships and dialogue with local actors, civil society and local communities and to support women’s organisations. • Address intersectionality of gender with other forms of discrimination. Focus should also be on the most disadvantaged women, for instance indigenous peoples and persons belonging to racial/ethnic/religious minorities, forcibly displaced, migrant, economically and socially deprived women, those living in rural and coastal areas, as they face multiple discrimination. Specific challenges for girls and of elderly women should be considered. Women with disabilities, also protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are particularly disadvantaged. The rights of women with disabilities should be at the core of the future strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities for the coming years (2021-2030). In the same spirit, advancing the rights of LGBTIQ persons is the focus of the EU LGBTIQ equality strategy, to be read in conjunction with GAP III. All intersecting dimensions are equally relevant. • Follow an approach based on human rights, which places the principles of non-discrimination and countering inequalities at the centre of all action. This includes helping every human being to exercise their human rights, participate in decisions concerning them and seek redress when their rights are violated” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020,4).

2. *applying gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators and statistics to monitoring and evaluation;*

3. *giving robust reasons, based on the findings of the gender analysis, to substantiate any action deemed not to contribute to gender equality (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 5).*

Indeed, there needs to be at least one action with gender equality as a principal objective supported in each country (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 5)¹⁴⁹. In order to reach its goals, still, “[a] coordinated, strategic and coherent EU engagement at multilateral, regional and country levels should be pursued in the implementation of GAP III” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 7).

Furthermore, while at the paragraph 3.4 the document underlines the importance of “3.4. Advancing equal participation and leadership”, in the next paragraph, 3.5, it addresses directly the WPS Agenda, acknowledging that:

In the 21st century, disasters and human-made crises, including conflict, have become more complex, protracted, and increasingly linked to global challenges, such as climate change, environmental degradation, displacement, and more recently, - pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic effect has demonstrated the centrality of the WPS Agenda in addressing increased violence threats and including women through the security/gender equality nexus (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 18).

Thus, it asserts that “Increasing the participation of women in all matters related to peace and security is a priority for the EU” and that according to the EU’s Strategic Approach to WPS,

the EU will implement its Action Plan on WPS which identifies clear objectives and fulfilment criteria, under the key priority areas of: (i) prevention; (ii) protection; (iii) relief and recovery, and the three overarching and cross-cutting principles of (iv) participation; (v) gender mainstreaming and (vi) leading by example (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 18).

¹⁴⁹ Seen, that “Research and Innovation has a pivotal role in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Horizon Europe programme will, through its international cooperation, contribute to joint solutions for global challenges, by supporting gender studies and intersectional research, women’s access to research funding and their participation in research careers, and the integration of a gender perspective in research content” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020,6).

Having mentioned that “women activists all over the world are championing environmental rights” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 19), and considering the EU’s human-centric approach (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 21), the policy underlines that

The ‘institutional cultural shift’ initiated by GAP II has brought significant but uneven progress. With GAP III, the EU is determined to make a leap forward, strengthening its own capacity to deliver on issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment as a collective responsibility for all its staff. This transformation requires gender responsive leadership and sufficient institutional capacity (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 22).

In fact, “[t]he EU is also committed to making substantial progress on gender parity in management positions, in line with the EU gender equality strategy. As announced in the political guidelines by President von der Leyen, by the end of the Commission’s mandate the gender balance for managers will be 50/50” (SWD (2020) 284 final 2020, 22).

Thus, the EU has the potential to be an important role model. Indeed, in welcoming the 2018 new EU strategic approach to WPS, the Council describes sustainable and lasting peace and security as intrinsic components of human rights and sustainable development (Consilium 2018). Likewise, in 2018, in her statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States, Mara Marinaki, highlighted how the EU, aiming at women's meaningful role in peace and security, consistently promotes gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights in its external action, “as they are at the core of our European values”. On the other hand, it needs to be aware of the losses it would suffer in “credibility and effectiveness” if “the EU itself does not practise what it preaches” (Batt and Valenius 2006, 11). Accordingly, women's political participation and leadership is “a prerequisite for the creation of inclusive and peaceful societies, sustainable development and peace”¹⁵⁰ (Marinaki 2018).

An interview within the framework of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS)¹⁵¹ highlighted that military and civilian missions and operations are part of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) characterized by a comprehensive approach to security. In fact, the mission works in agreement and coordination with the EU Delegations in the same area and in the framework of the EU regional policies. The decisions about the deployment and the management of

¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the ambassador asserts that: “We recognize the crucial role of UN WOMEN, together with other relevant stakeholders, in helping our common efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Together with other regional organisations, such as the OSCE, NATO and the African Union, we will continue our joint engagement to integrate a stronger gender dimension into all peace and security efforts. We welcome and engage in all initiatives that help strengthen these efforts, such as the Global Network of Gender Focal Points, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and the Women Mediators' Networks” (Marinaki 2018).

¹⁵¹ held on the 4 of June 2020.

the mission are taken by the EU countries during the Foreign Affairs Council. Still, the EU is not doing peacekeeping, in fact that is a very specific mandate, while the EU work is mostly related to training missions, capacity building missions, security sector reform, political sphere advising and border management. Some missions, still, have been peace enforcement missions. The informer also pointed out that in the development of the EU policy plan on the WPS Agenda the member states were very involved. Further, in the EU action plan there are both the approaches of gender balancing and gender mainstreaming which need to complement each other. The informant also explains that in the SAF, which were among the first armed forces to explicitly work with gender, and in Norway the focus has been on gender balancing rather than gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, according to the interviewee “if you are building your house with the foundation of why women should be included, you are using a completely wrong approach”. The EU has a very strong rights-based approach, which takes into account the objectives of not reinforcing stereotypes, avoiding the instrumentalization of women, measuring the language about women and gender. Considering, however, all the rhetoric and wishful thinking expressed by words such as “protect women” (according to the interviewee “actually it is all about it”), the interviewee asked which is the real practice of security. Indeed, looking at these consolidated narratives the informant underlined the need for self-reflection and a critical approach.

On this sense, already in 2008 the EU commissioned a study on “Enhancing the EU Response to Woman and Armed Conflict. With particular reference to development policy”. As the authors point out:

The title of the study was originally women affected by armed conflict. However, as will be demonstrated below and in line with internationally agreed principles, women are both affected by and can affect the nature and course of armed conflict (either negatively or positively). They also play a significant role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the local and national levels. Thus, the title is now women and armed conflict (Sherriff and Barnes 2008, ix)

It is thus possible to see how the questions the report asks remain still very valid:

Has the EU, through political dialogue or other methods, encouraged compliance with UNSCR 1325 in terms of women’s participation and gender equality? What resources could the EU allocate to support women’s involvement and gender mainstreaming in peace processes? How can the EU collectively support such initiatives? (Sherriff and Barnes 2008, xiii).

6.5 The OSCE framework

It is, at this point, necessary to look at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is the largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and is active in all phases of conflict.

The OSCE is primarily engaged with civilian operations without uniformed personnel even if there is personnel with police or military experience. Moreover, the majority of the international personnel is seconded by OSCE member states (Smit and Tidblad-Lundholm 2018, 32). Therefore, even if the OSCE expressed its commitment to increase the number of women in its missions in its 2004 Gender Equality Action Plan, reaffirming it in a review conference in 2014, and the representation of women seems to be relatively high this is mostly civilian staff and also in this case, the increase in the percentage of women is strongly connected to a decrease in the number of men (Ghittoni, Lehouck and Watson 2018, 10).

As observed, an informant¹⁵² underlined that the people who work for OSCE is civilian staff, in some cases with a background in the military, and in the field operations the work is mostly done in collaboration with the police, for instance in the sector of border control. The interviewee also underlined how to just increase the numbers concerning women is not enough, in fact the institution does not change automatically and discrimination, harassment and practical issues (in relation to barracks, equipment, uniforms) would just remain there. Yet, the interviewee remarked that the WPS Agenda has brought civil society and security institutions together for the first time, forcing them to collaborate and thus see different perspectives on security, especially thanks to the process of developing NAPs.

During another interview within the context of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE¹⁵³, not only the relevance of this office in relation to the WPS Agenda was underlined¹⁵⁴ but the informant explained also that since 2008 the organization has been publishing a Gender and Security Toolkit, which aims at challenging masculine institutional cultures so as to increase women's participation and overall diversify narrow forms of manhood in the security sector institutions. Indeed, the interviewee highlighted that Security Sector Reform (SSR) is key to sustaining peace. Still, considering for instance PKOs, the interviewee underlines that there is a

¹⁵² During an interview held on the 25 of February 2020.

¹⁵³ During an interview held on the 28 of February 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Considering that it offers support, assistance and expertise to participating states and civil society in order to promote democracy, rule of law, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination.

misconception since very high focus is put on women soldiers in terms of their specific value, there is a misunderstanding that adding women would make the operation more gender responsive. In this sense, women soldiers are considered to be useful in order to access the local population, but they do not want to be taken into account for that, they want to be seen as soldiers, they want to be put in all the roles, not just in what is considered as a “woman job”. Indeed, this is also against gender equality. Further, when the armed forces arrive in the operational areas they have already been trained by their national structures and the largest contributors to PKOs are countries which have quite different training and education systems.

6.5.1 Institutionalizing gender within OSCE

OSCE adopted its first Gender Action Plan in June 2000¹⁵⁵, a few months before UNSCR 1325, and replaced it in 2004 with a new plan which is still in force. Already in 1991, the Moscow Document, released by the OSCE’s predecessor, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), stressed the importance of equality between women and men for a just and democratic society (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 6). In 1998 the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly organised a meeting of female parliamentarians on “The Role of Women in Connection with the OSCE’s Conflict-Preventive Activities” in Copenhagen (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 11)¹⁵⁶ and in 1999 an Informal Working Group on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established. Finally, a coalition, made up of members of OSCE delegations (in particular Switzerland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway and the UK), of the Parliamentary Assembly, of OSCE itself and of the civil society, formed a “velvet triangle” which succeeded in introducing gender issues into the OSCE (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 13-14). Still, initially the focus remained only on the human dimension of security, thus “hard” security continued to appear as a masculine sphere and gender issues as “soft” security issues (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 14).

Gradually, also the politico-military dimension began integrating gender issues: in 2005 the OSCE adopted the Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation¹⁵⁷, in order to incorporate UNSCR 1325 into the OSCE’s own obligations and activities and to increase the participation of women. Particularly important in this

¹⁵⁵ OSCE, 2000. Action plan for gender issues, SEC.GAL/12/00/Rev.7, 1 June 2000

¹⁵⁶ Also as a reaction to events such as the involvement of Italian OSCE staff in Kosovo in forced prostitution (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 12).

¹⁵⁷ OSCE, 2005. Decision No. 14/05: Women in conflict prevention, crisis management and postconflict rehabilitation, MC.DEC/14/05, 6 December 2005

sense was the work led by Sweden¹⁵⁸. Further, since her appointment in 2011, the Gender Adviser for the politico-military dimension has had a leading role within OSCE for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, yet unlike the EU and NATO, no Regional Action Plan for the integration of the WPS Agenda has been adopted by OSCE (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 18).

In the 2014 guidance note on Integrating a Gender Perspective into Internal Oversight within Armed Forces, developed by OSCE/ODIHR, DCAF and the OSCE Gender Section, some examples of gender issues in the armed forces are explicitly mentioned:

- *The recruitment, retention and promotion of women;*
- *The work/life balance of service personnel, in particular for fathers and mothers;*
- *The handling of complaints of gender-related harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse;*
- *The protection of civilians, including from sexual violence and exploitation by military personnel; and*
- *The implementation of institutional or national-level policies related to gender, e.g., a national action plan on the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security (Bastick 2014, 2).*

In particular, this guidance note forms part of a series that takes an in-depth look at oversight issues within the Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit, a joint publication by DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR and UN-INSTRAW¹⁵⁹, first published in 2008 with the last tools published in 2020. The other guidance notes in the series are Integrating Gender into Oversight of the Security Sector by Ombuds Institutions & National Human Rights Institutions, and Integrating Gender into Internal Police Oversight.

To the question “Why is it important to integrate a gender perspective into internal oversight within armed forces?”, the note answers: “To create armed forces that benefit from the capabilities of both women and men”, explaining that:

¹⁵⁸ the Swedish Delegation, supported mainly by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (the Swedish government agency for peace, security and development) organised an OSCE expert seminar on “Women in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management”, which took place in Vienna in June 2005, in order to promote UNSCR 1325 in OSCE (Folke Bernadotte Academy 2005, OSCE Delegation of Sweden 2005).

¹⁵⁹ The UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women which was a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly, merged in 2011 into UN Women.

The full integration of both women and men is necessary for armed forces to draw upon all the available skills and talents of service personnel and of the country. Moreover, women can bring particular operational advantages, such as better engagement with local women. Unfortunately, in many armed forces women experience discrimination in terms of the positions open to them and their career progression. Both women and men often find balancing parenting responsibilities with deployments and working conditions very difficult. Therefore, monitoring human resources processes, and paying special attention to the particular experiences and needs of women and men, helps armed forces to increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of talented female personnel, and to retain personnel as they become parents

but also “To increase force security and mission effectiveness”, “To prevent and address sexual discrimination, harassment, bullying and abuse within armed forces” and “To prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse committed by armed forces against civilians” (Bastick 2014, 11-12). Indeed, an interviewee¹⁶⁰ underlined that harassment and abuse within the armed forces is still widespread considering in particular that some states do not even collect data on these issues.

In its handbook “Gender in military operations: Guidance for military personnel working at tactical level in Peace Support Operations”, published in 2018, OSCE asserts that the 2005 OSCE Ministerial Council decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation discloses the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men as essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region. Furthermore, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the UN, this organization is also committed to promoting the implementation of the WPS Agenda resolutions, linking gender equality and security (OSCE 2018, 5). Indeed, the guidebook underlines that “[m]en, women, boys and girls are components of a gendered system, and therefore have a distinct influence on, and are distinctly influenced by, armed conflict. However, women and girls are disproportionately adversely affected, and thus, have a unique perspective to share and solutions to offer” (OSCE 2018, 6). Then, while mentioning the integration of gender perspectives, women’s participation, the protection of civilians including women and girls, and the respect for human rights as apparently autonomous goals (OSCE 2018, 6), the manual focuses on the relevance of integrating a gender perspective in operational planning and activities for the benefit of military missions and operations (OSCE 2018, 8), presenting a long list of advantages connected to female presence within peace

¹⁶⁰ During an interview held on the 28 of February 2020.

support operations, reminding to include also intersectional conditions in gender analysis (OSCE 2018, 14).

Further, taking into account the concept of comprehensive security, which is part of the narrative of OSCE, it is important to observe that not only it includes the political military aspect and the economical environmental but also the human security part which is its human dimension. This latter aspect is focusing more and more also on the inclusion of minorities and on the freedom of speech. Thence, OSCE looks at human security and human rights in the whole context of security. For instance, it gives advice and support to member states, in particular in policy development and capacity building, such as gender assessment, and especially it works to train the national institutions to do it themselves. It also supports participating states by creating discussion platforms¹⁶¹.

In fact, in her statement, delivered on 27 October 2017, Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues in the OSCE, recalls that the WPS Agenda is integrated within OSCE comprehensive approach to security, not only in the politico-military field, but also in economic and environmental issues and in the promotion of human rights and democratic institutions, in connection with the 2030 Sustainable Development goals. Indeed, the OSCE works to support its participating States in the integration of gender equality, particularly in developing and implementing NAPs (for instance by conducting National Action Plan Academies) and gender-inclusive mediation processes (Darisuren 2017, 1). Being aware of the necessity for strong leadership in these efforts, the OSCE has also introduced the Executive Gender Coaching programme for the Secretary General and Secretariat Directors (Darisuren 2017, 2). Further, Ms Darisuren states that the OSCE will participate in key initiatives like the WPS National Focal Point Network and the Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 (Darisuren 2017, 3).

6.5.2 What about the member states?

In July 2018 the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE published a Baseline Study Report on Women in the Armed Forces in the OSCE Region which starts by recalling that:

The OSCE participating States have made a number of commitments regarding the issue of gender equality (Moscow 1991, Istanbul 1999, Sofia 2004), women's participation in efforts for the promotion of peace and security (Sofia 2004, Ljubljana 2005, Vilnius 2011) and equal opportunities within the security

¹⁶¹ As underlined during an interview held on the 28th of February 2020.

services, including the armed forces, to allow for balanced recruitment, retention and promotion of women and men (Athens 2009) (Atkins 2018, 2).

In fact, the Director of ODIHR sent a questionnaire about the inclusion and situation of women in the armed forces in the OSCE region to Heads of Delegations in all 57 OSCE participating States in September 2017. The information received from the delegations provided a baseline in order to measure progress, gather best practices and support the very work of ODIHR. Responses were received from 29 participating States (1. Albania, 2. Armenia, 3. Azerbaijan, 4. Belgium, 5. Bosnia & Herzegovina, 6. Canada, 7. Denmark, 8. Estonia, 9. Finland, 10. Georgia, 11. Germany, 12. Greece, 13. Kazakhstan, 14. Latvia, 15. Lithuania, 16. Montenegro, 17. Netherlands, 18. Norway, 19. Poland, 20. Portugal, 21. Serbia, 22. Spain, 23. Sweden, 24. Switzerland, 25. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 26. Turkey, 27. Turkmenistan, 28. Ukraine, 29. United Kingdom). Additionally, three participating States responded that they have no armed forces: Lichtenstein, Monaco and San Marino. The Key Findings were:

- *All participating States have equal pay and terms and conditions for servicewomen and servicemen (except with regards to provisions related to maternity).*
- *National equality legislation applies to the armed forces in 89 per cent of participating States and 72 per cent of participating States have introduced new laws or policies relating to women's service in the last ten years.*
- *All positions, branches and services are open to servicewomen and servicemen in 22 of the 29 states that submitted responses. Two of those states plan to remove all restrictions soon, which will increase the number of states with no de jure occupational segregation. However, there is de facto occupational segregation in some states.*
- *While most OSCE participating States have no mandatory conscription, seven reported having mandatory male but voluntary female conscription. Two have universal conscription and one was considering changing from mandatory male to mandatory universal conscription. One state has voluntary military service for both genders.*

- *Women's representation across all service personnel ranges from 17 per cent to 2 per cent. The average across the 21 states who answered this question was 10 per cent. Thirteen states had a figure of 10 per cent or higher.*
- *Servicewomen were less likely to be deployed on operations than servicemen. In 24 per cent of states women made up between 1 and 5 per cent of personnel deployed for over three months. In under one-third of states, the figure was between 5 and 10 per cent and in one tenth of states, it was under 1 per cent.*
- *55 per cent of the states that submitted responses have strategies to promote and increase the number of women recruited into the armed forces. These included targeted recruitment material and campaigns, access to serving female personnel, shortening the recruitment process and better understanding the motivation of women and men for wanting to join the military.*
- *Seventeen percent of states that submitted responses have minimum recruitment targets. Some also have targets for increasing women's overall representation. Three states have maximum targets for servicewomen.*
- *There is still horizontal occupational segregation in all states that submitted responses. Over 24 per cent of States have at least one woman in flag officer ranks (NATO OF 6-8). However, for almost 50 per cent of the states the highest serving female officer is at OF 5 – Colonel or equivalent.*
- *In half of states which submitted a response on the percentage of servicewomen and servicemen who received a promotion in 2016, servicewomen are doing as well or better than servicemen in promotions.*
 - *In most of the states that submitted responses there is no difference in the average length of service between women and men. In 10 per cent of states, the length of service is set by the law or other regulations, and is the same for both genders. In 15 per cent of states the length of service is shorter for servicewomen.*
 - *In all states that submitted responses there is little difference between servicewomen and servicemen in the reasons for leaving their positions. The most frequent reasons for both genders were reaching the end of a contract, economic reasons and family reasons. The difficulty of combining work and family seems equally influential for servicemen as for servicewomen in making the decision to*

leave their positions. However, there are some gender specific reasons that stand out. Lack of cultural fit and poor treatment is a reason given by women, and distance to home is a reason given by men. In some states, women appear to be frustrated by the lack of career opportunities, rather than just the level of pay.

- Over three-quarters of states have adapted uniforms in some way for servicewomen. Over half have adapted facilities and approximately 20 per cent have adapted equipment. Three states systematically consider specialist and gender-sensitive ergonomic advice in commissioning and designing new equipment.*

- All but one of the states that submitted responses make some provision for familyfriendly work and work/life balance. Over three-quarters of states offer parental leave to men as well as women. The length of leave varies from four months to three years. Parental leave is mostly paid in whole or in part, and is often combined with, or can be followed by, unpaid leave. In many states it is up to the parents to decide how to share the leave between them, at least for part of the time.*

- Six of the states that submitted responses make provision for breastfeeding breaks until the child's first birthday. Women are usually given between one and one and a half hours of breastfeeding time per day. Having such arrangements as a right can be an important protection for servicewomen against any perception that they are less committed to a military career than men.*

- 41 per cent of states have policies for flexible and/or part-time working on a longterm or regular basis. 46 per cent of states make provisions for the temporary care of children or near family members. Over 17 per cent of states have provisions to ensure that both parents of young children are not deployed at the same time.*

- The issue of gender-related harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse is being taken very seriously in some states and strategies for change are being led from the top of the armed forces. Although formal complaints about such behaviour go through the chain of command in three-quarters of states, many have multiple channels for making informal as well as formal complaints. There*

is a variety of military, Ministry of Defence and civilian bodies that can give advice, support, and in a number of states, investigate complaints.

- *41 per cent of states have no complaints about such behaviour and 25 per cent have no system for collecting data on complaints. A small number of states concluded that a lack of complaints indicated a lack of incidents. That is not a view shared by all. The complaint and/or anonymous survey data referred to by nearly half the states indicated that this was a problem experienced disproportionately by servicewomen. Only 10 per cent of states that submitted responses provided information about the level of such incidents in previous years and most of those States asserted that there had been no change. Although one quarter of states have no systems for collecting data on complaints, in a few cases those management information systems were in the process of being developed.*

- *Most states that submitted responses have policies or laws that prohibit such behaviour and also have programmes to provide training to service personnel. In almost one quarter of states this training is mandatory. One state has undertaken an independent external review that showed that laws, policies and training were necessary but not sufficient. Effective action required a comprehensive programme to change culture, lead from the top. Strategies deployed by other states include national and local action plans, mechanisms of accountability of the chain of command, such as mandatory upward reporting of incidents, and a central expert unit to analyse, monitor and initiate action to correct systemic weaknesses and prevent future incidents.*

- *Sexual and gender -based violence is subject to military or civil prosecution in nearly all states that submitted responses. It is subject to civil prosecution in over a third of states and military prosecution only in one-quarter of states. Both options are available in one-third of states.*

- *57 per cent of states that submitted responses have undertaken satisfaction surveys in the last five years and two others plan to do so soon. Not all survey results were disaggregated by gender. There are no consistent patterns of difference between servicewomen and servicemen, except with regards to levels of*

discrimination, unacceptable behaviour or lack of respect, which are higher for servicewomen in a small number of states.

- *There are differences between states in the gender representation of medical staff. In over one-third of states, women represented between one quarter and one half of medical personnel. In one-quarter of states over half of medical personnel were female.*
- *49 per cent of the states that submitted responses have networks to support women in the military and 64 per cent have a military or MOD entity that deals with equal opportunities for women and men in the military.*
- *55 per cent of the states that submitted responses have gender advisers. The United Nations Security Resolution 1325 is mentioned by one-third of all States as a resolution that underpins National Action Plans on gender.*
- *37 per cent of the states that submitted responses would welcome further contact or assistance from ODIHR on this subject. Suggestions include sharing information and good practices, support with training and the development on models, and tools to improve policies and practices in the future (Atkins 2018, 2-5).*

Some OSCE participating States, such as Norway and Sweden, have established mandatory conscription for both women and men, while other states have voluntary military service for both (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 185). Several OSCE participating States retain mandatory conscription for men and voluntary military service for women, including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Switzerland, Turkey and Turkmenistan. While this practice is permitted by international law, it can support the perception of the armed forces as a masculine profession and it can be problematic from the perspective of equality of opportunities (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 186).

Reasons given by some states for excluding women from certain roles ranged from protecting women's health, including reproductive health, women's lesser physical strength, to potential disruption of operational effectiveness and team cohesion. In practice, "the concentration of women in support roles continues in many OSCE States" (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 187), further, "[a]ll armed forces experience vertical occupational segregation" (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 188).

In conclusion:

Including women in the armed forces expands the pool of talent available and broadens the abilities, skills and experience needed for effective operations at home and abroad. The actions required, however, to enable women and men to develop and contribute effectively are not just those required to increase their representation. The focus needs to be on how armed forces create a non-discriminatory working environment and support for women and men. That requires a strategic approach by senior military leadership (OSCE and DCAF 2021,196).

Moreover, in March 2021 the ODIHR Office published a compendium of standards, good practices and recommendations on the Human Rights of Armed Forces Personnel, which at the chapter 11 deals with women in the armed forces and is based on the previously mentioned 2017 questionnaire on the representation of women in the armed forces in the OSCE region.

Especially problematic is, though, the consensus rule of OSCE decision-making which is hindering progress of the OSCE's gender policy, taking into account also that the 2004 Gender Action Plan needs to be revised (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 22)¹⁶². In particular, the Holy See has expressed forms of opposition primarily based on disagreement on particular values, on the other hand, the Russian opposition "is likely linked to the utility it sees in using gender equality to push back against the overall human rights agenda and the human dimension work where it encroaches on Russian interests" (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 23-24). In fact, as underlined in the previously mentioned interview¹⁶³, OSCE is rather a political organization based on consensus among member states, while the UN has a broader mandate and can take decisions based on majority. Still, also thanks to the OSCE comprehensive understanding of security, feminist policies have played a major role in further opening up this very comprehension of what security means.

6.6 The CoE framework

Considering at this point the Council of Europe, it is of particular relevance the text released in 2005 by the group of specialists on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building (EG-S-CP). In the long list of recommendations to Member States, it asks for the

¹⁶² Participants in the OSCE Security Days in 2015, a conference dedicated that year to the issue of gender, recommended "that the OSCE develop its own action plan to integrate the Women, Peace and Security agenda more efficiently into the OSCE policies" (OSCE 2015, 7).

¹⁶³ Held on the 28th of February 2020.

promotion within their education programmes of a culture of peace which takes into account a gender perspective.

Particularly significant is the appendix which contains different definitions. Conflict (next to which the terms complexity and holistic approach are put under focus) is defined as follows:

Conflicts over objectives, divergent interests, needs, and values are part of social interactions. Conflicts are a creative and necessary means of bringing about social change. Conflicts are unavoidable in order to change unequal power relationships between women and men. The aim of conflict prevention and resolution and peace building is not to prevent social conflicts from taking place, but rather to prevent that threats of violence or the exercise of violence pervade social relationships. The definition of conflict includes violent conflicts. Violence is understood very broadly and includes all forms of violence as well as exploitative, unequal social relations that cause unnecessary suffering

Violence as:

A gender-sensitive definition of violence covers personal (direct, physical), structural (indirect) and cultural (legitimising) violence against women, men, girls and boys. Violence does not only occur in armed conflict, but also within structures and actions that disadvantage certain people because of their sex, origin, ethnic group or political or religious beliefs. It follows that the prevention of violence does not only mean preventing armed conflicts, but also influencing all people, structures and symbols that employ, encourage, propagate or legitimize violence in any form against women, men, girls and boys.

And peace as:

A gender-sensitive definition of peace covers freedom from violence at personal, structural and cultural level, as well as a just social system. This includes equality of the sexes: the same rights, opportunities and powers of decision-making for women and men – a sine qua non for a just social system. Gender-sensitive peace building efforts contribute to the abolishment of all forms of violence against women, men, girls and boys at all levels of society (individual, domestic, communal, national, regional and international) and actively contributes to social justice for all.

(EG-S-CP (2005) RAP 2, 5-6)

Finally, human security is understood in these terms:

A gender-sensitive definition of security operates with a broad notion of human security, such as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This human security approach is based on the premise that military security measures for the defence of the territorial integrity of states hardly contributes to protect the civilian population against violent attacks. The human security approach therefore focuses on the security needs of the individual person. Measures designed to address these needs comprise protection of women, men, girls and boys of all forms of violence, the promotion of economic, ecological and social security for all individuals. There is no peace without justice. A gendered approach of human security comprises the full guarantee and implementation of women's human rights. Women call for security arrangements that ensure equal rights, including rights to inheritance and property, absence of (private and public) violence, protection against sexual attacks, equal political participation and occupational equality.

(EG-S-CP (2005) RAP 2, 6)

On the other hand, though, this is just a draft recommendation, another resolution which has been adopted in the context of the Council of Europe is Resolution 1385 (2004), entitled “Conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women”¹⁶⁴. The content of this resolution is quite considerable, it starts by recalling that: “[c]onflict is a gendered activity: women and men have different access to resources, power and decision making before, during and after conflicts. The experience of women and men in situations of tension, war, and post-conflict reconstruction is significantly different”. At the same time, however,

[w]omen are thus caught in a vicious paradox: while they are the main civilian victims of conflicts, they are often powerless to prevent them, excluded from the negotiations when it comes to their resolution and confined to a marginal role in the post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. The general exclusion of women from decision-making positions prior to, during and following violent conflicts, reinforces their victimisation.

¹⁶⁴ <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/17233>

Subsequently, recalling UNSCR 1325 and different European resolutions, the Parliamentary Assembly admits that “Europe has so far failed to ensure women’s full participation on an equal footing with men in conflict prevention, peace operations and post-conflict peace-building”, for instance in peace talks in Kosovo.

Further, the policy asserts that the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security can be accomplished only taking into account the impact of armed conflicts on women and developing measures to assure their empowerment and security, seen that their equal participation “is an essential precondition for establishing lasting peace”. In this view, the resolution asks the governments and parliaments of the member states not only for increasing public awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace-support operations and for adequate training of military personnel, but also for increasing the access of women to media and communication technologies so that they can influence public discourse and decision making on peace and security; and for adequate training of editors and journalists. Indeed, all of this is necessary in order to achieve “education in peace”.

Further, in 2016 Resolution 2120 on “Women in the armed forces: promoting equality, putting an end to gender-based violence” was adopted. This Resolution starts by reminding that:

The missions assigned to today’s armed forces are increasingly wide-ranging and extend beyond national defence to include participation in peacekeeping operations abroad and in internal operations in the context of combating terrorism. At the same time, the professionalisation of armies and increased competition with other employers mean that it is increasingly in the armed forces’ interest to capitalise on a diversity of professional experience and interpersonal skills.

It then continues affirming that: “Women who join the armed forces are faced with an environment designed by and for men. They face many forms of discrimination and are confronted with rigid career plans and mentalities that are still rooted in a purely male approach to the armed forces”. Addressing the issue of sexual harassment within the armed forces it states that: “Whereas conforming to the existing internal culture is often regarded as a factor of cohesion, the armed forces should instead recognise that diversity strengthens operational capacities. It is vital to change mentalities [...]”. Thus, it makes reference to Recommendation 1742 (2006) and to the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)4 on the human rights of members of the armed forces, acknowledging that “members of the armed forces cannot be expected to respect human rights in their operations unless respect for these rights is guaranteed within the armed forces themselves”. It also

reminds that the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210), that is the Istanbul Convention, covers all types of violence and applies both in peacetime and during situations of armed conflict. It also explicitly asks members states:

“with regard to the creation of a climate more conducive to gender equality within the armed forces, to:

6.2.1. make an active commitment at all levels of the chain of command to change mentalities and the internal culture in the armed forces so that all differences are positively accepted and turned to account;

6.2.2. include teaching on the gender dimension in all stages of military training and make sure that both women and men teach in military academies;

6.2.3. include gender advisors in all bodies so that gender is taken into account systematically and as an integral part of everyday work;

6.2.4. establish and support the functioning of networks of military women;

6.2.5. ensure that equipment and uniforms are suitable for women’s bodies and that living quarters are adapted for accommodating both men and women”.

Finally, it also refers to “the significant role that parliaments can play in the democratic scrutiny of the armed forces” (Resolution 2120, 2016).

During an interview with a representative of the Council of Europe ¹⁶⁵, it was highlighted the role of Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building, which has, though, no monitoring mechanism. Additionally, it is fundamental to consider the role of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which pursuant to art.2 applies also in situations of armed conflict. Most recently, the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2019) provides the first ever internationally agreed definition of sexism. This recommendation is particularly relevant for the armed forces, seen that military culture inherently values behaviour and characteristics that conform to norms of masculinity, and moreover not only systemic gender bias are widespread, but also “gender-based harassment and violence is prevalent” (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 182-183).

¹⁶⁵ During an interview held on the 19 of December 2019.

Considering, though, that the CoE is a standard-setting organization and that institutional change takes decades, more than looking for results it is important to look for the trends, as underlined in the previously mentioned interview¹⁶⁶, it is necessary to observe if there is an actual internalization process. For what concerns the concept of security within the CoE it is understood in a comprehensive way, an approach which was actually conceived even before the concept of human security. In this sense, the issue of violence against women is a security issue in a broader sense, in fact half of the population is not secure.

6.7 Conclusions

As we have examined throughout this chapter observing the main international organizations concerned by the implementation of the WPS Agenda in the European context, it is remarkable to observe that all the main regional organizations have personnel specifically dedicated to the WPS Agenda. At the same time, as observed by means of all these different documents “the WPS Agenda is shifting from being a construction centred only on armed conflict to opening its windows to diverse security challenges, encompassing also non-military security challenges such as migration, climate change, and economic development”, becoming consequently more and more essential to the human security agenda (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020).

Still, as we have considered at the beginning of this chapter, in an overall climate of rising authoritarianism, populism, and nationalism, the COVID-19 pandemic has represented only the most recent “economic and social whiplash, leaving women more vulnerable and with limited options”, in fact “the human security framework gets sidelined in favor of old-fashioned, state-centric, and militarized views of the international system” (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020).

Considering that “[w]ithout a gender lens, without a gender perspective, we are flying blind” (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020), it is especially important to look comprehensively at the efforts of the UN but also of the many regional and subregional organizations to mainstream the WPS Agenda (among others also the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States) and the role of networks such as the African Women Leaders Network and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation

¹⁶⁶ Held on the 19th of December 2019.

(Femwise-Africa), as well as the recent Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks (Secretary-General 2019, 24).

Overall, though, women continue to be under-represented among the personnel deployed in UN, EU and OSCE peace operations. Notwithstanding discrepancies, in fact the UN is the most transparent about its data and the EU the least, the gap between men and women remain wide at all levels and, as observed, when the representation of women improved, this was often because missions and organizations were deploying fewer men rather than more women (Smit and Tidblad-Lundholm 2018, 38).

During the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), focused on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, held in March 2020, the first speaker, Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu, UN Assistant Secretary-General, underlined that sustainable peace requires the inclusion of everyone in society, and women's participation to peace processes and mediation is critical. Then, Ambassador Neil Bush, put the focus on the need to engage also men in this process explaining that: "As the Chair of the OSCE MenEngage network I am determined to continue to progress work to raise awareness of the influence all of us can have in speaking out against inequality and in ending gender-based violence" (OSCE 2020). In fact, during an event organized by the think tank Friends of Europe in June 2020, Paivi Kannisto, Chief of the Peace and Security Section at UN Women reported that leadership is still lacking in this work, according to Charlotte Isaksson, current Senior Gender Advisor at EEAS, it is necessary to constantly review who has a voice and what their role is. Likewise, Clare Hutchinson, previous NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for WPS, argued that: "If you want to count numbers, you just get numbers. Equality is about putting policies into practices and programmes and making sure that the voices are heard; and just because you increase the number of women that doesn't automatically happen" (Friends of Europe 2020a)¹⁶⁷.

In this sense it is particularly significant this request of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom:

we demand the dismantling of systems where "women's rights and peace are always seen as secondary to men's priorities and military security". The next decade's approach must be centred on working towards structural changes to promote systems and economies that prioritise gender equality, human well-being, dignity, and livelihood. In order to achieve sustainable and feminist peace.

¹⁶⁷ Besides, what the numbers show is that between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world, and peace efforts in 2020 have similarly struggled to include women (Council on Foreign Relations 2020).

This starts with ensuring that women are owners of and partners to the agendas that inevitably affect them and their communities, and that women's voices be included and listened to in all crosscutting issues and debates. Women's rights and gender equality are not just a part of peace and security, but are inextricably linked to it (Kaptan 2020, 40-41).

As a matter of fact, this agenda has the capacity to bring about social transformation, but many questions remain:

Are the UN, the EU, NATO and other organisations doing enough to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS)? Despite the failings in enforcing Resolution 1325, have there been other significant innovations in international peace and security processes in the last two decades? How can the WPS Agenda address gendered aspects of security challenges arising from the COVID-19 crisis? (Friends of Europe 2020b).

7. How the WPS Agenda lives in the Italian and Swedish context

“Without a gender lens, without a gender perspective, we are flying blind” (de Jonge Oudraat and Kathleen Kuehnast 2020)

Looking at the European context and, specifically, at Sweden and Italy, it is first of all possible to see the paramount relevance of national action plans, which work as guiding principles among all the different policies. Indeed, the Security Council presidential statement of 28 October 2004 required member states to develop NAPs to implement UNSCR 1325, “including through the development of national action plans” (S/PRST/2004/40 2004, 3).

7.1 The leading role of NAPs

In 2014, the OSCE released a study on National Action Plans on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. In 2020 it published a new study which builds on the key findings and recommendations of the former: one key positive development is the increase in the number of NAPs from 27 to 36. In this sense, an interviewee¹⁶⁸ observed that the study reflects an overall quality improvement as compared to the previous ones, and the presence of more concrete action, which it is probably related to a global learning process where the new generation of NAPs are always better because they learn from the previous one.

On the other hand, there is still very little funding for the implementation of these NAPs, according to this study 86 per cent of participating States’ NAPs did not report almost any information on the topic (Myrntinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 4). In order to develop more effective NAPs, thus, there should be clear indications about budgeting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms, but also wider room for civil society involvement (Myrntinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 5-6).

As observed, moreover, whilst NAPs vary considerably from state to state, they have also started to comprehend wider topics, such as climate change, human trafficking, and preventing violent extremism. At the same time, this trend can create major issues of coordination among the different governmental actors involved in the implementation phase (Myrntinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 11). Another fundamental aspect to be taken into consideration is that the positioning of the NAP within the government characterizes its focus as internal or external but also the possibility for this

¹⁶⁸ During an interview held on the 25 of February 2020.

policy to have effective influence (in particular government bodies are often not adequately financed (Myrttinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 12)¹⁶⁹.

For what regards the “normative” aspect of the WPS Agenda, the 2014 study underlined that – “many National Action Plans portray women as ‘natural peace builders’ when they argue for women’s inclusion in peace processes. This risks perpetuating an image of women as inherently different from men, and states should be careful in the language they choose” (OSCE 2014, 71). On the other hand, as an important example, the current Irish NAP states simply that: “Women’s human rights are the foundation of the WPS Agenda.” That is the understanding that the WPS Agenda is a rights agenda rather than a narrow security agenda.

Still, what is needed is a holistic vision of the WPS Agenda: to “transform harmful gender relations and empower women” (Myrttinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 23). In fact, WPS NAPs have tended to be “great for women in the security sector, brought some benefits in terms of women and security [more broadly], but had much less impact for women and peace” (as quoted in Myrttinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 75).

In the same year as the previously examined OSCE study, Caitlin Hamilton, Nyibeny Naam and Laura J. Shepherd at the University of Sydney published a study called “Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned”. Considering again the necessity for a holistic approach, they remind that in the fourth Norwegian NAP there is written clearly that: “No single body, section or embassy is expected to be able to deliver on all parts of the action plan. It is through joint efforts that we will achieve our ambitions and fulfil our commitments as they are described here¹⁷⁰” (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 8). It is also important to look at the fact that some NAPs have anticipated the very WPS Agenda: whilst trafficking in persons has become concretely part of the agenda only with UNSCR 2467 in 2019, this topic was already introduced even in some of the first NAPs such as Denmark (2005), Norway (2006) and Sweden (2006).

Yet, according to this study since the majority of the NAPs on the global level do not allocate a precise budget and do not provide clear M&E mechanisms, “[t]he current set of NAPS does not give us any reason for hope” (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 14).

¹⁶⁹ In the end, indeed, “political will is perhaps the most difficult dimension of a high-impact NAP to capture and quantify” (Myrttinen, Shepherd and Wright 2020, 15).

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2019/09/Norway-NAP-4-2019-2022.pdf>

It must be taken into account that coordination, including with civil society organisations (CSOs), is an important aspect of an effective NAP, indeed, the meaningful collaboration with civil society is necessary to fulfil the principle of participation but also of localization, that is “reinterpreting and reconstructing UNSCR 1325, an international norm, to specific sub-national contexts” so as to promote ownership of WPS (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 20)¹⁷¹. The study also warns against the risks associated with the increasing emphasis on indicators of efficacy, which can lead to manipulation towards “predetermined results”. Still, as remarked so far, even an ‘ideal’ NAP (based on the 6-point scale¹⁷² used in this specific report) is nonetheless irrelevant if it is not actually implemented (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 25).

Therefore,

NAPs require consideration – and no doubt negotiation – of priorities, responsibilities, funding, and the ideas of gender, peace, and security. NAPs (perhaps inadvertently) reveal a lot about countries: which relationships they see as valuable, how they see their place in the world, and what the most pressing security issues are perceived to be. But NAPs shouldn’t just be documents. The whole point of a NAP is that it is to be implemented: so that more women will take part in peace negotiations; so that gender-based violence is reduced, or eliminated, in conflict and post-conflict contexts; so that necessary services are funded on the ground; and, of course, so that, ultimately, conflict is prevented. As we approach the anniversary of the first twenty years of the WPS Agenda, this, then, must be the goal: now is the time for states to move from rhetoric to commitment, and from plan to implementation (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 26).

Overall, as a WPS practitioner from Belgium asserted:

¹⁷¹ In this sense, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), an autonomous program of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), launched its first Civil Society Monitoring project in 2010 and the second one in 2014 in order to hold governments accountable to fully and effectively implement the WPS Agenda (GNWP 2014, 8).

¹⁷² Based on the following research questions: 1. Which pillar(s) of the NAPs are dominant? Is this changing over time? 2. What are the dominant categories of lead, including over time and by region? 3. To what extent are new and/or emerging security issues – such as terrorism, climate change and reproductive rights – represented in the NAPs? 4. To what extent is a budget specified in the NAPs? 5. To what extent do the NAPs contain provisions for monitoring and evaluation activities? 6. To what extent do the NAPs document the participation of civil society in production and implementation? (Hamilton, Naam and Shepherd 2020, 2).

“I would say that a NAP is exactly as good and effective as the process to produce it allows it to be; if the process is inclusive, constructive, well-informed and advised, and if the plan is accompanied by inclusive political will and funding, then wonderful. If it is used as a fig leaf, or to silence equality critics by recruiting more women into armies; or if it is produced, beautifully laid out and then left on a shelf, with no financial resources, at the underfunded Ministry of Women/Gender Affairs, run by a budget-less Minister with no Cabinet position... then... nothing will happen. We need to think of resolutions, NAPs etc not as static norms but dynamic tools which need constant attention to stay alive and stay relevant to the lived needs of women on the ground” (Kaptan 2020, 36).

In fact, as of October 2020, 86 out of 194 (44%) UN member states, including the observer state of Palestine, have adopted a NAP¹⁷³, still, only 38% (33 out of 86) of member states have adopted subsequent versions of their NAPs; 41% (35 out of 86) of the adopted NAPs are outdated, only 33% (28 out of 86) adopted NAPs include an allocated budget, and finally there is no accountability mechanisms on NAPs within the very agenda (Kaptan 2020, 35-36).

¹⁷³ And many are adopting their first one, such as Mexico (de Jonge Oudraat and Kuehnast 2020).

7.2 The Italian framework

The first legislative intervention specifically concerning the role of women in the defence of the state dates back to July 1919, when the king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III, issued a law that allowed women to exercise their professions and hold all public positions, with the exception of those involving jurisdictional powers and pertaining to the military defence of the State. The limitations to the participation of women in the life of the State imposed by the law of 1919 were overcome by the concept of equality between the sexes sanctioned by the Republican Constitution and in particular by articles 3, 37, 51 and 52 which identify, in fact, the rights and duties, in terms of equality, attributed to all the Italian citizens of both sexes. In addition to the Constitution, the equality between the sexes is sanctioned by the civil code, family law, the criminal code and guaranteed by numerous international treaties and resolutions. Despite the clarity of the constitutional provisions, the law 9.2.1963 n. 66, which allowed women access to all offices including the judiciary, kept an exception for the military service. An important goal was achieved, in the meantime, with the access of women to the civil police force: law no. 121 of 1981 on the reorganization of the Public Security and the demilitarization of the State Police allowed, in fact, the recruitment of women in the State Police, the Penitentiary Police and the State Forestry Corps. Finally, there was the adoption of the law n. 380/99 by which the Parliament admitted women in the Armed Forces and in the Guardia di Finanza, starting from the year 2000, delegating the Government to issue, within six months from the date of entry into force of the law, the legislative decrees to regulate the recruitment, legal status and advancement of female military personnel. Further, according also to the opinion of the Advisory Committee on women's voluntary service, it was decided to envisage, until 2006, a maximum limit of between 10% and 30% of women, in relation to the category concerned, due to the logistical-infrastructure situation of the institutions (Difesa 2020a).

The very Ministry of Defence, reminding us that on the 20 of October 1999, with law number 380, Italy aligned itself with the NATO countries by opening the Armed Forces to female recruitment, underlines that “[w]ith career progression in a few years, women will be able to aspire to top positions in the military hierarchy”. In fact, female recruitment followed a gradual introduction process: in a first phase, priority was given to the recruitment of officers in order to have women capable of instructing and guiding the recruits. The progressive admission of women to various roles made it possible, according to the Ministry of Defence, to address and resolve all personal, logistical and infrastructural problems, adapting and modifying an organization designed and powered, up to that moment, exclusively by male personnel. After this first phase, in 2006 recruitment was extended to

the Carabinieri, eliminating any limitation on recruitment percentages. Since 2009 military high schools have admitted also female students (Nunziatella and Teuliè for the Army, Morosini for the Navy and Douhet for the Air Force). According to a theoretical projection, the first female officer, coming from the normal roles of military academies, will be evaluated for promotion to the rank of colonel in 2024. The Arma dei Carabinieri already has female officers in the ranks of brigadier general and colonel from the Forestry Corps (Police force incorporated into the Carabinieri on 1.1.2017) and by the State Police (Difesa 2020a).

7.2.1 The Italian NAPs on the WPS Agenda

7.2.1.1 *The first NAP (2010)*

Italy has adopted so far four different plans on the WPS Agenda. The first plan was indeed adopted in 2010, for the period 2010-2013, and it starts by recalling that UNSCR 1325

establishes that: 1. Women and children are the groups most affected by armed conflict; 2. Women play an essential role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace-building activities; and 3. All UN member states are invited to ensure a broader participation of women in all decision-making processes, particularly in the fields of conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution (NAP 2010, 1)

it then recalls the UN principle of zero tolerance for SEA, depicting it as “morally unacceptable, in violation of international norms and punishable by law” (NAP 2010, 1). It continues by underlying that Italy played a leading role in the negotiations to assure that the connection between international security and sexual violence was finally recognized. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Human Rights Unit, an Interministerial Working Group was set up to draft the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 as a way to strengthen and coordinate efforts to protect the human rights of women, children, and the most vulnerable groups in a conflict area (NAP 2010, 2). This NAP, considering the evolving nature of these commitments and projects, should be considered a strategic framework, which can adapt to further elements, including from an operational standpoint, in the course of its three-year term (NAP 2010, 3).

Recognizing the three main objectives of UNSCR 1325 as:

1. The prevention of violence against women and children, and the protection of the rights of women and children, during and after armed conflict; 2. The growing participation of women in peace processes; 3. The application of a

*gender-based approach to all projects and programs to promote peace (NAP
2010, 4),*

the policy identified a number of sub-goals that is: 1. Increasing the number of women in the national police and armed forces, and strengthening the inclusion of women in peace operations and the decision-making bodies of peace operations, because they are “an essential component of both the Italian police and armed forces” (NAP 2010, 5). In terms of the voluntary enlistment of women in the military service, Act 380/1999 (subsequently amended by Legislative Decree 66/2010, which contains the Military Code¹⁷⁴) grants women access to the armed forces. Legislative Decree 24/2000 provides for the voluntary recruitment, status and career advancement of women in the military. This law was later incorporated into Legislative Decree 198/2006, "Code on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women"¹⁷⁵. Article 1, paragraph 6, of Act 380/1999, established the yearly maximum quotas for the recruitment of women in various roles, bodies, groups, and specializations of each armed force, as decided by the Minister of Defence and proposed by the Chief of the General Staff because of logistical problems. Article 26 of Act 29/2006 (subsequently incorporated into Legislative Decree 66/2010) amended this provision, cancelling the above quotas for all roles, bodies, groups,

¹⁷⁴ 2. Il Ministro della difesa, inoltre, propone al Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri, la relazione annuale da presentare al Parlamento, in ordine allo stato della disciplina militare e allo stato dell'organizzazione delle Forze armate, in relazione agli obiettivi di ristrutturazione, riferendo, in particolare: a) sul livello di operatività delle singole Forze armate; b) sul grado di integrazione del personale militare volontario femminile; (art.10 p.4).

Art. 24 Altri organi consultivi e di coordinamento 1. Sono disciplinati nel regolamento i seguenti comitati e commissioni: a) Comitato unico di garanzia per le pari opportunità, la valorizzazione del benessere di chi lavora e contro le discriminazioni; b) Comitato consultivo per l'inserimento del personale militare volontario femminile nelle Forze armate e nel Corpo della guardia di finanza;

Art. 623 Personale militare femminile

1. Le Forze armate si avvalgono, per l'espletamento dei propri compiti, in condizioni di assoluta parità, di personale maschile e femminile, secondo le disposizioni contenute nel presente codice.

Art. 639 Reclutamento volontario femminile

1. Il reclutamento del personale militare femminile è effettuato su base volontaria secondo le disposizioni vigenti per il personale maschile, salvo quanto previsto per l'accertamento dell'idoneità al servizio dalle norme contenute nel regolamento e salve le aliquote d'ingresso eventualmente previste, in via eccezionale, con il decreto adottato ai sensi del comma 2. 2. Ferme restando le consistenze organiche complessive, il Ministro della difesa può prevedere limitazioni all'arruolamento del personale militare femminile soltanto in presenza di motivate esigenze connesse alla funzionalità di specifici ruoli, corpi, categorie, specialità e specializzazioni di ciascuna Forza armata, se in ragione della natura o delle condizioni per l'esercizio di specifiche attività il sesso rappresenta un requisito essenziale. Il relativo decreto è adottato su proposta del Capo di stato maggiore della difesa, acquisito il parere della Commissione per le pari opportunità tra uomo e donna, d'intesa con i Ministri delle infrastrutture e dei trasporti e per le pari opportunità.

Art. 2139 Reclutamento volontario femminile nel Corpo della Guardia di finanza

1. Il reclutamento del personale militare femminile nel Corpo della Guardia di finanza è effettuato su base volontaria secondo le disposizioni vigenti per il personale maschile, salvo quanto previsto per l'accertamento dell'idoneità al servizio dalle norme contenute nel regolamento di cui al comma 3 e salve le aliquote d'ingresso eventualmente previste, in via eccezionale, con il decreto adottato ai sensi del comma 2. 2. Ferme restando le consistenze organiche complessive, il Ministro dell'economia e delle finanze può prevedere limitazioni all'arruolamento del personale militare femminile soltanto in presenza di motivate esigenze connesse alla funzionalità di specifici ruoli, categorie, specialità e specializzazioni del Corpo, qualora in ragione della natura o delle condizioni per l'esercizio di specifiche attività il sesso rappresenti un requisito essenziale.

¹⁷⁵ Last amended in 2017, by the Law n. 205 of 27 December 2017.

and specializations (NAP 2010, 5)¹⁷⁶. Act 380/1999 also provided for the establishment of an Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee for the inclusion of female volunteer personnel in the Armed Forces and the Corps of the Revenue Guard Corps”), to assist the Chief of the General Staff and the General Commander of the Revenue Guards Corps (Guardia di Finanza -customs and excise police). Presidential Decree (DPR 90 of 15 March 2010), containing the Unified Text of the military system regulations, amended the duties, duration and composition of the above Committee¹⁷⁷. In 2002 the Chief of the General Staff issued military ethics guidelines, a professional ethics and conduct code aimed at preventing critical behaviour in interpersonal relations, which point out that the implementation of these principles ensures the proper performance of institutional duties. Thus, according to the law, there are no legislative limits on the deployment of women (NAP 2010, 6)¹⁷⁸. The number of women in senior positions is though limited, which, as stated by the NAP, depends on their relatively recent entry into the armed forces or the lack of the requirements to be deployed abroad. In the field, “where the female component is essential for certain duties”, the employment rate for women is approximately 3.3%. According to the NAP, in some cases, the role of women is decisive in achieving the mission’s objectives, for example, when there is the need to interact with

¹⁷⁶ The State Police has included women since 1959 (in the so called “women’s corps”), making it the first Italian police force to do so. Although their duties were initially limited to the protection of minors, a new public security law adopted in 1981 (121 of 1 April 1981) made official equal opportunities between men and women. This 1981 police reform placed male and female staff on equal footing for career advancements and performance of functions (NAP 2010, 5). See also Legislative Decree 66, of 15 March 2010, entitled Code of the Military System.

¹⁷⁷ Art. 83. Comitato consultivo per l'inserimento del personale militare volontario femminile nelle Forze armate e nel Corpo della Guardia di finanza

1. Il Comitato consultivo del Capo di stato maggiore della difesa e del Comandante generale del Corpo della Guardia di finanza per l'inserimento del personale militare volontario femminile nelle Forze armate e nel Corpo della Guardia di finanza istituito con decreto del Ministro della difesa, di concerto con il Ministro della economia e delle finanze e con il Ministro per le pari opportunita' ha il compito di assistere il Capo di stato maggiore della difesa e il Comandante generale del Corpo della Guardia di finanza nell'azione di indirizzo, coordinamento e valutazione dell'inserimento e della integrazione del personale femminile nelle strutture delle Forze armate e del Corpo della Guardia di finanza.

2. Il Comitato e' composto da sette membri, dei quali almeno quattro donne, in possesso di adeguate esperienze e competenze nelle materie attinenti ai settori di interesse del Ministero della difesa e del Ministero dell'economia e delle finanze. Quattro membri del Comitato consultivo sono scelti dal Ministro della difesa con proprio decreto e un membro e' scelto dal Ministro dell'economia e delle finanze con proprio decreto. Il Ministro per le pari opportunita' designa i restanti due membri, uno dei quali e' indicato dalla Commissione per le pari opportunita' tra uomo e donna.

3. L'importo del gettone di presenza corrisposto ai componenti del Comitato consultivo e' determinato con decreto del Ministro della difesa, emanato di concerto con il Ministro dell'economia e delle finanze.

4. La durata del Comitato consultivo e del mandato dei suoi membri e' disciplinata dall'articolo 88.

5. Per quanto non espressamente previsto si applicano le disposizioni del decreto interministeriale 19 giugno 2000 di istituzione del Comitato consultivo.

¹⁷⁸ The same general terms of recruitment, legal status and career advancement are applied to women as to men, in compliance with the equal opportunities’ principle. Female staff have access to the various ranks, qualifications and specializations on an equal basis with men without exception. The rights of female staff are protected by Decree 198/2006 (“Code of equal opportunities between men and women”), which prohibits discrimination between women and men in the military careers by introducing additional protections for female staff during their training period. Parenthood is protected by the Armed Forces’ full implementation of Legislative Decree 151/2001, except for measures incompatible with the unique nature of the Armed Forces, which are provide for by Legislative Decree 165/2001. Pregnancy and both maternity and paternity leave therefore receive comprehensive protection. Presidential Decree 171/2007 (the most recent significant measure concerning Armed Forces personnel) introduced, through Article 14, a series of regulations to improve the abovementioned protection measures for parents working in the Armed Forces (NAP 2010, 20).

Muslim women in Islamic countries. To allow women “to perform the professional duties with peace of mind”, the document asserts that improving the living standards and quality of life of its military and their families is a top priority and that Italy is committed to supporting for families whose members are deployed on international missions (NAP 2010, 7).

Again, the paper stresses that the limited presence of women in the armed forces, particularly at the higher ranks, depends on the recent access of women to the military sector, that dates back to approximately ten years ago, but it is “[a]ware that this trend will change in the following years” (NAP 2010, 8). Considering that “[o]n equal footing with men, women have access to all ranks, qualifications and specializations without any sort of distinction. The only difference can be detected in the competition notices for the drafting in the Army, which envisage more favorable minimum physical standards for women when to undertake the physical tests”, the NAP underlines that in order to provide for adequate training activities, Italy is committed to developing specific initiatives at the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) in Vicenza (NAP 2010, 8).

Under the heading, “2. Promoting the inclusion of a gender perspective in all Peacekeeping Operations”, the first Italian NAP reminds us that the entry of women into the armed forces has required the adoption of an ethical code of conduct on respectful behaviour toward others. This Code, which was drafted in cooperation with the Advisory Committee, represents a standard of ethics intended to prevent discriminatory conduct among personnel, “confirming the importance of the principles of equal opportunity, equality and tolerance as the sole means to guarantee mutual respect and the proper fulfilment of one’s duties” (NAP 2010, 9). The action plan asserts that

[a] gender perspective could also be introduced in every stage of peace-support operations through: - The inclusion of gender-sensitive research and statistics with gender disaggregated data and specific research on other forms of discrimination; - Gender-sensitive research in the area of deployment, bearing in mind the customs and traditions of the women of the host country (NAP 2010, 9).

Also, Italian Cooperation’s 2011-2013 guidelines for gender equality and women’s empowerment, adopted in November 2010, provide a reference point for Italy’s strategic and operational action, based on the Principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness, for the achievement of the Millennium Goals, particularly MDG 3. In fact, Italian Cooperation has set among its top priorities the promotion of women’s rights and the fight against

gender-based violence, in particular, the practice of female genital mutilation / cutting (FGM/C), but also women's empowerment and reproductive health (NAP 2010, 10)¹⁷⁹.

For what concerns, “3. Providing special training for personnel on peace missions, with a focus on resolution 1325”, the policy recalls the training institutes of the armed forces and the Carabinieri Corps, that supply programs on international humanitarian law, but also the courses offered in the context of the ISSMI (National Institute of the Joint Staff Command), providing courses for army officers, for legal advisors to the armed forces and in the civil-military cooperation (COCIM) courses. All these courses will be integrated with special modules focusing on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 and their implications, particularly the identification as a war crime of all forms of sexual violence committed during armed conflict (crimes against humanity or any act that may lead to genocide) and on health issues, such as FGM/C and HIV/AIDS. In fact, “[t]o ensure the deployment of qualified personnel, the training of men and women deployed on peace-making missions must include courses on gender-related issues and violations of human rights of women and children” (NAP 2010, 12). The mission of the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU)¹⁸⁰ plays a significant role: to raise awareness and increase global capacities in peace support operations, with a focus on African Countries, in particular “for the protection of minors, women, and gays” and especially providing courses on international humanitarian law¹⁸¹(NAP 2010, 13).

Considering the section 4, “Protecting the human rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups either fleeing armed conflicts or living in conflict and postconflict areas (including in refugee camps) and strengthening women's participation in peace processes”, it is important to observe how the text states that violence against women can be defined as an abuse of power and control expressed through physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse. It also remarks that, at the domestic level, the legislation on sexual violence (Act 66/99) introduced important new measures, such as including sexually-related offenses in the category of crimes against the individual, increasing prison sentences, and introducing the crime of gang rape. At the international level, seen UNSCR 1820, the NAP explains that Italy is going to adopt Legislative Decree (A.S. 2099), on the newly-drafted “Code

¹⁷⁹ See for instance https://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2020/09/documento_triennale_2019-2021_-_rev.pdf

¹⁸⁰ On 1 March 2005, pursuant to Italy's commitments at the G8 Sea Island Summit of 2004, which adopted the Action Plan "Strengthening Global Capacity for Peace Support Operations (PSO)", the Carabinieri Corps with the contribution of the U.S. State Department, established at the "Chinotto" barracks in Vicenza the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU). The purpose of CoESPU is to increase global skills for peace support operations, with particular attention to the African countries training international peacekeepers by means of a "training the trainers" approach (NAP 2010, 20).

¹⁸¹ For instance on the United Nations Charter; the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols; the applicability of armed conflict law to peacekeeping operations; the ban on the use of force and self-defense in the UN Charter and in international practice; human rights protection, from the Universal Declaration to the repression of international crimes; war crimes and the repression of gross violations of humanitarian law; and the jurisdiction of international courts, with particular reference to the International Criminal Court (NAP 2010, 21).

for Military Missions Abroad”¹⁸² (approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2010), which fully implements Article 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (NAP 2010, 15). Additionally, the document reminds us that, by Act 7/2006, Italy introduced to the Criminal Code specific provisions (such as article 583-bis and article 583-ter) which criminalize the practice of FGM without therapeutic cause and, in this context, Italy re-established in 2009 the Commission on Female Genital Mutilation, whose mandate is to draft programs to prevent and fight FGM/C practices. In the same year, the Ministry of Health helped to draft guidelines on “Global health: Guiding Principles of Italian Cooperation” which included principles to be applied in crisis management (NAP 2010, 15-16). According to the policy, whilst being aware that in addition to women, boys and girls are among the primary victims of armed conflicts (NAP 2010, 16), women should be especially supported in reconstruction programmes, where they are often at a competitive disadvantage, for example, in access to microcredit (NAP 2010, 17).

For what regards the relationship with civil society in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, it is necessary to think about the importance of the territorial dimension and the grass-roots level, but also to offer women greater opportunities to express their views and show their capabilities in the fields of economy, environmental protection, and in the political and governmental decision-making processes. In order to do this, it is necessary the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, but also the cooperation with the thematic working group on gender policies that was set up in 2006 and the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights (CIDU), in its capacity of national focal point on UNSCR 1325, indeed these actions can bring to “a women’s culture” (NAP 2010, 18). At the international level, Italy is committed to promoting the issue “Women, Peace and Security” through its Embassies and “[i]ntroducing the issue “Women, Peace, and Security” as a priority question to be raised during the Universal Periodic Review of UN Human Rights Council, when addressing the human rights situation of member states under consideration” (NAP 2010, 19).

7.2.1.2 The second NAP (2014)

The NAP adopted in 2014 starts by recalling that Italy is among the first countries to have promptly ratified the Istanbul Convention (entered into force on August 1, 2014). Further, under the UK Presidency of the G8, Italy readily supported in April 2013 the initiative on the “Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones”, by signing the declaration stating that “rape and serious forms of sexual

¹⁸² The process drawn up by Law 145/2016 is as follows: participation in military missions is approved by the Council of Ministers, Cdm, subject to communication to the President of the Republic and eventual summoning of the Supreme Defense Council. The resolution of the Cdm is sent to the Chambers which authorize or deny the authorization. The authorization may be subject to conditions. The applicable law is the military criminal code for peace time; however, the government could decide on the applicability of the military criminal code for war time for a specific mission. In this case, however, a legislative measure is necessary and the government must present a specific bill to the Parliament, which has, thus, the last word (Ronzitti 2017).

violence in the context of war are serious violations of the Geneva Conventions." It also highlights how, at the international level, and in view of its next Presidency of the Council of the EU (July-December 2014), the Italian government was concretely engaged in the fight against forced and/or early marriages, which need to be taken into account also in the context of armed conflicts (NAP 2014, 2). In fact, gender equality and women's empowerment are compelling issues, both internationally and nationally, in the prevention of all forms of violence: from domestic family violence to the more extreme mass atrocities, as is the case in armed conflicts (NAP 2014, 3). Seen also the ongoing economic crisis, the NAP recognizes that there is the need to develop an integrated approach to enhance the understanding of the complexities of the situations in a given conflict as well as of their impact, including the economic, affecting all levels and all components of society: men, women and children, a vision which was already part of the foundation of the Guidelines of the Italian Cooperation, 2011-2013. In this context the Italian government recognizes that Capacity-building and Human Rights Education are both essential and need to be further supported.

Taking into account the relevant documents, including, in particular, the 2011-2020 UN Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security and the most recent UN Resolutions of the Security Council, the second NAP (2014-2016) works towards implementing the initiatives that Italy is already supporting to reduce the negative impact of conflict and post-conflict situations on women and children whilst promoting, at the same time, the participation of women in the resolution and prevention of conflicts as "agents of change". On the other hand, it recognizes that violence against women and children remains one of the most prevalent forms of systematic violation of human rights worldwide (NAP 2014, 3). Aware of the principle of interdependence between the three pillars of the United Nations, namely Peace, Security, Development and Human Rights, the NAP underlines that at the latest debate on WPS in the Security Council (October 18, 2013), Italy expressly supported UN Secretary-General and the Director of UN Women reiterating that "the promotion of women's participation is essential to ensure a credible and lasting peace", that is an evolutionary interpretation of the UN Charter.

Further, in terms of monitoring and evaluation, unlike the previous edition (2010-2013), this policy asserts that the Government will submit an updated and revised report at the end of the first year, identifying the areas that need to be strengthened, especially following consultations with both civil society and the Parliament. Further,

[f]rom a substantive standpoint, in line with the "3P Framework" (Prevention, Protection, Participation, and Relief and Recovery) (See UNSCR 1325 - 2000), the Italian Authorities will endeavour to promote gender equality, women's

participation in all areas of human activity and women's human rights in general, through constant inter-ministerial work to ensure the effectiveness of the Plan (NAP 2014, 4).

The NAP highlights the necessity to involve other stakeholders especially in light of upcoming events such as the Italian semester of the EU Presidency (July-December 2014); the High-Level Review of Resolution 1325; the Review of the Beijing Conference (Beijing +20); and the Post -2015 Development Agenda (NAP 2014, 5). Additionally, it reminds us that the idea of "National Action Plans for the Implementation of Resolution 1325" was launched for the first time by the President of the UN Security Council in his Presidential Statement of 28 October 2004, inviting UN membership to push forward the implementation of Resolution 1325, "including through the development of national action plans" and that

[i]n substance, the UNSCR1325 is known for: 1. recognizing that women and children are the most affected by the consequences of armed conflict; 2. recognizing that women play a vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as in peace-building activities; 3. inviting Member States to ensure greater participation of women in all decision-making processes, in particular, in the mechanisms of prevention, management and resolution of conflicts (NAP 2014, 6).

It also stresses that other UNSCRs can be integrated with the Agenda and can be equally considered, such as UNSCR1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians (NAP 2014, 7).

The NAP then proceeds by reporting that during its first two-year term on the Security Council, Italy promoted a "practical-minded 1325 informal group" to work on strengthening and consolidating women's participation in political processes in close collaboration with other members of the EU and the UN. Moreover, Italy made an important contribution to UNSCR 1820 (2008) on the subject of sexual violence in armed conflict, especially in the negotiations to recognize the link between international security and sexual violence, in the sense that the latter can significantly exacerbate armed conflicts and thus impede the restoration of peace and international security (NAP 2014, 8). In particular, the connection between women's empowerment and combating violence against women and children is considered to be a priority matter also in relation to Italy's forthcoming candidacy to the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term. Indeed, "[t]his is a broad-based and cross-cutting issue, requiring operational strategies where the role of women as "agents of change" in all life sectors should be acknowledged and re-enforced – so that women are no longer considered mere survivors

of violence” (NAP 2014, 9). In fact, Italy, as the seventh largest contributor to the UN, has fully supported the work of UN Women since its inception. Also, Italy works closely, in particular, with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children Involved in Armed Conflict, as well as with the Office of the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. The Italian government has also contributed to the Peace-Building Fund since its establishment, and thus ranks among the top fifteen contributors to the UN (NAP 2014, 12). Furthermore, in relation to the UN Human Rights Council, the NAP underlines that Italy will be developing in the upcoming months a specific initiative on early and/or forced marriages. Actually, in July 2011 Italy was among the first States Parties to mention its NAP on UNSCR1325 before the CEDAW Committee in New York. Accordingly, Italy welcomed the recent General Recommendation No. 30 of the CEDAW Committee, focused on the role of "women in the prevention of conflicts and in conflict and post-conflict situations" (NAP 2014, 9). In its previous NAP, Italy was also the first country to recognize the importance of UNSCR1325 in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). During the G8 Summit held in London on April 10-11, 2013, Italy backed the Declaration on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) and welcomed also the General Assembly's adoption, on April 2, 2013, of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which was promptly ratified by Italy with Act No. 118, dated October 4, 2013 (NAP 2014, 10).

Thus, the policy paper looks at the NATO context reminding that during the Chicago Summit of 2012 the participants decided to launch a study on the practical implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Alliance missions, led by the Swedish Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations (NAP 2014, 19) and in August 2012, for the first time, NATO's Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative on "Women, Peace and Security" assisted by an expert on gender issues, who was at the time an Italian national. After having mentioned the OSCE, the document observes the European Union highlighting the tripartite agreement between the EU, UNDP and UN Women dated February 2012, but also the EU Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities (Doc.15779/09)¹⁸³, the EU Document "Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of

¹⁸³ According to this document, the EU, as a global actor committed to the promotion of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development, is generally seen as a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict and is thus well placed to mediate, facilitate or support mediation and dialogue processes. While mediation is not a new area to the EU, a more coordinated and focused approach will enhance the EU's ability to play a more active international role in this area. The European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 underlines the relevance of "preventive engagement" and the need to use all conflict prevention instruments at the EU's disposal "including political, diplomatic, military and civilian, trade and development tools". The SG/HR's 2008 Report on the Implementation of the ESS explicitly acknowledges the need to "expand (the EU's) dialogue and mediation capacities" (Doc.15779/09 2009, 2). In particular, it reminds us that "[m]ediation is a way of assisting negotiations between conflict parties and transforming conflicts with the support of an acceptable third party. The general goal of mediation is to enable parties in conflict to reach agreements they find satisfactory and are willing to implement. The specific goals depend on the nature of the conflict and the expectations of the parties and the mediator. A primary goal is often to prevent or end violence through cessation of hostilities or cease

Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security (Doc.15671/1/08 REV1)"¹⁸⁴ and "Within the Strategic Context and the EU Plan on Human Rights and Democracy" adopted in June 2012 (Doc. 11855/12 - in particular Action 12)¹⁸⁵ (NAP 2014, 11). Looking at the EU Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities, it is important to observe how it affirms that thanks to its own experience as a peace project and its engagement for human rights and the rule of law, the EU is a credible promoter of dialogue and mediation as a non-coercive response to tensions and conflict (Doc.15779/09 2009, 6). Further it also stresses that the guiding principles in this work are: (a) Coherence, (b) Comprehensiveness (c) Assessment of risks (d) Transitional justice and human rights (e) Promoting the participation of women; in fact, "it is only through justice to victims that enduring peace can be achieved" (Doc.15779/09 2009, 8). Still, "women's under-representation in mediation processes and peace negotiations as well as the lack of

fire agreements In order to ensure peace and stability in the long-term, mediation should be cognisant of and, as appropriate, address the root causes of conflict (Doc.15779/09 2009, 2-3). Further, "[f]acilitation is similar to mediation, but less directive, and less involved in shaping the substance of the negotiations" and "[d]ialogue is an open-ended process which aims primarily at creating a culture of communication and search of common ground, leading to confidence-building and improved interpersonal understanding among representatives of opposing parties which, in turn, can help to prevent conflict and be a means in reconciliation and peace-building processes. Successful dialogue can de-escalate conflict and render more formal mediation unnecessary". Overall, "[m]ediation is an effective and cost-efficient instrument for conflict prevention, transformation and resolution" (Doc.15779/09 2009, 3). Indeed, the EU is engaged in the entire spectrum of mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes and has also a lot to offer as an actor in mediation (Doc.15779/09 2009, 4) Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/cfsp/conflict_prevention/docs/concept_strengthening_eu_med_en.pdf

¹⁸⁴ In light of information from civil society and, in particular, from the Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office - including the Civil Defense Studies Center: "10 points on 10 years UNSCR 1325 in Europe (CSO Position Paper on Europe-wide implementation of UNSCR 1325)" and its follow-up, as well as the previous "Civil Society Recommendations on the Implementation of UNSCR1325 in Europe "(in which Pangea actively participated as one of the most active CSOs in this area). See www.eplo.org/gender-peace-andsecurity; www.pacedifesa.org/canale.asp?id=359

¹⁸⁵ Which reminds us that: "The European Union is founded on a shared determination to promote peace and stability and to build a world founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Sustainable peace, development and prosperity are possible only when grounded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Yet respect for human rights and democracy cannot be taken for granted. Their universal nature is questioned on grounds of cultural differences. The EU will continue to throw its full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy and human rights throughout the world (Doc. 11855/12 2012,3). The EU will speak out against any attempt to undermine respect for universality of human rights, in fact article 21 of the Treaty on European Union has reaffirmed the EU's determination to promote human rights and democracy through all its external actions. The entry into legal force of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the prospect of the EU's acceptance of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights through its accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, underline the EU's commitment to human rights in all spheres. Within their own frontiers, the EU and its Member States are committed to be exemplary in ensuring respect for human rights. Outside their frontiers, promoting and speaking out on human rights and democracy is a joint responsibility of the EU and its Member States (Doc. 11855/12 2012,4). Finally, the EU will continue to campaign for the rights and empowerment of women in all contexts through fighting discriminatory legislation, gender-based violence and marginalisation (Doc. 11855/12 2012, 6). Thus, in order to reflect human rights in conflict prevention and crisis management activities, it is required to: (a) Include human rights violations as one of the indicators for the early warning matrix in developing an EU early warning system; (b) Systematically include human rights, child protection, gender equality- and IHL where relevant - in the mandates of EU missions and operations and in their benchmarks, planning and evaluation; (c) Operationalise the EU comprehensive approach on implementing UNSC resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, in particular ensuring women's equal involvement in all efforts for the maintenance of peace and security, including post-conflict reconstruction; (d) Devise a mechanism for accountability in case of possible breaches of the Code of Conduct by operation or mission staff (Doc. 11855/12 2012, 17).

gender expertise in mediation teams seriously limit the extent to which women's experiences of conflict, and consequent needs for justice and recovery, are addressed in these processes” (Doc.15779/09 2009, 8). Thus, the EU needs to promote not only the representation of women but also the availability of adequate resources for dedicated mediation gender expertise (Doc.15779/09 2009, 8-9)¹⁸⁶.

Additionally, like the previous NAP, the second NAP reminds us that an inter-ministerial working group has been set up at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by the recently re-established InterMinisterial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), with the support of the Human Rights Unit of the General Directorate for Political Affairs and Security dealing with multilateral affairs¹⁸⁷. The policy additionally informs us that the NAP is meant to remain in force for a period of two years and to be constantly monitored through high-level and specific annual meetings and progressive reporting. The reporting will be conducted with relevant CSOs, to guarantee operational effectiveness and develop a more holistic and synergetic approach, especially in light of the aforementioned upcoming regional and international deadlines, specifically the High-Level Review of UNSCR1325, scheduled for September-October 2015 (NAP 2014, 12). It also underscores that it is intended to ensure that a gender perspective will be incorporated in all political areas supporting the concept of peace and will be adopted in all practical measures used for the promotion and protection of peace. In this context, as noted, UNSCR1325 envisages three main goals: 1. Prevention of violence against women and children and the protection of their rights during and after armed conflicts; 2. Greater participation of women in peace-building processes; 3. Application of a gender approach in all projects and programs related to the promotion of peace (NAP 2014, 13). For what regards the objective to “1. Enhance women’s presence in the national Armed Forces as well as within national police forces, by strengthening their role in decision-making processes related to peace missions”, it is remarked that in 1981, with the new Order of the Administration of Public Security (approved by Act No.121 of 1 April 1981), the principle of equal opportunities between men and women was officially introduced. Also, the recruitment (always voluntary), status and career advancement of female military personnel have been provided for by Legislative Decree No.24 of January 31, 2000, - as subsequently converted into Legislative Decree No. 198, dated April 11, 2006, ("Code of equal opportunities between men and women"), and later into Legislative Decree No. 66 of 2010 (NAP 2014, 14). In fact, the presence

¹⁸⁶ Thus, it also underlines that the EU will seek to identify female mediators, promote the representation of women and the availability of gender expertise from an early stage of mediation processes (Doc.15779/09 2009, 12).

¹⁸⁷ Which is made up of the following: the OSCE and NATO Offices both belonging to the same General Directorate, together with the General Directorate for Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the General Command of the Carabinieri Corps, the Revenue Guards Corps, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Health (jointly with INMP), CNEL, as well as the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

of women is reported to be essential for certain specific tasks and thus for the overall achievement of the objectives of a mission:

[t]he role of women is, in some cases, crucial to the achievement of a mission's objectives. For example, when approaching women in Islamic cultures - this can only happen through female military personnel and/or female staff in general; in check point, search and seizure-related activities; and female military doctors in countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where they are often involved in resolving health issues affecting women - while respecting their culture and religion (NAP 2014, 15).

It is pointed out that in 2002, the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defence issued special Directive ("Military Ethics"), which is an actual code of conduct designed to prevent unlawful conduct among staff members which have been incorporated into a larger document, applicable to all Inter-Forces, called: "Guidelines on Equal Treatment, Interpersonal Relationships, Family Protection and Parenting" (NAP 2014, 16). Of particular relevance is also the establishment in 2012 of a dedicated organizational unit, at the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defence, called "Equal Opportunities and Gender Perspective." This unit was created in evolution of the existing "Female Military Staff" Section (created in 2000 for the first recruitment of women in the Armed Forces) and it serves to integrate women into the military, in particular through the implementation of a gender perspective and, therefore, of UNSCR 1325 (2000) within the Armed Forces and within the Carabinieri Corps, also through constant cooperation with the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives. This Unit is the Focal Point for the development of gender policies within the Joint Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Defence and is responsible for overseeing the Armed Forces and Carabinieri training programs for integrating a gender perspective. Furthermore, it will conduct statistical studies, provide training on special topics and events, including the media, aimed at spreading a gender culture. This Unit is also responsible for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 within Inter-Forze, which is the national Focal Point for NATO-related activities and for other national and international organizations dealing with these specific topics (NAP 2014, 17). In order to help spreading the culture of gender equality and integration among the Armed Forces and the Carabinieri Corps, it is evoked that the establishment of the professional posts of Gender Advisor/Gender Field Advisor/Gender Focal Point is a reality and that some officers are already attending the related training course at the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations of the

Swedish Armed Forces International Centre (SWEDINT) in Sweden¹⁸⁸. Also, the candidature of CoESPU has been presented to NATO as a Centre of Excellence for training on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) for other gendarmerie forces from allied countries (NAP 2014, 18)¹⁸⁹.

Looking at the objective, 2. Promoting a gender perspective in peace-support operations, the NAP starts by recalling that from a historical standpoint, the revival of gender issues took place in the second half of the past decade, beginning with the 2007 Bamako Conference, "Women Protagonists in West Africa", which made it possible to significantly increase the Italian Development Cooperation interventions to achieve Millennium Development Goal No.3 (gender equality and women's empowerment) (NAP 2014, 20). Considering the activities carried out by Italy in this field, women's empowerment is confirmed as a cross-cutting priority issue, as depicted in the Italian Development Cooperation Guidelines and in the Cooperation Planning for the 2011-2013 triennium areas of food security and environment (NAP 2014, 21). Accordingly, an initiative was launched already in 1998 by Italy, together with academia and decentralized cooperation, the "Guidelines for the Enhancement of Women's Role and the Introduction of a Gender Perspective in Development Cooperation Policies", with the objective of women's empowerment (NAP 2014, 26). Further, the NAP recalls the "establishment of a contingent of civilian peace corps, intended for training and testing of 500 young volunteers to be engaged in peace missions, to be carried out by NGOs, in areas of conflict or at risk of conflict, as well as in areas of environmental emergency". Also, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), as the national Focal Point for the implementation of the National Plan, intends to initiate consultations with the "Working Group on Civilian-led Peace Missions" (Tavolo interventi civili di pace) (NAP 2014, 27).

As for what regards the third objective, namely ensuring specific training on the various aspects of UNSCR 1325, in particular to personnel taking part in peace operations, it is pointed out that some ad hoc teams, known as "Female Engagement Teams" (FET), have been formed by two specialized Army Units, namely the Multinational CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) Group, whose Headquarters are in Motta di Livenza, and the 28th Regiment PAVIA, located in Pesaro which are intended to establish a direct relationship with the local population. According to the document, "[p]ersonnel assigned to these Teams are provided with all necessary instruments, including linguistic tools, for cultural interaction and cooperation with the local female population" (NAP 2014, 28). In

¹⁸⁸ At the time of the NAP, 9 officers had been qualified (six officers from the Army, one from the Navy, one from the Air Force, and one from the Carabinieri).

¹⁸⁹ In this context it is important the SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL (SEDM), which is an initiative launched in 1996 with the aim of promoting integration in the Security and Defense sectors among Member-States belonging to south-eastern Europe.

addition, the policy underlines that the visits to Vicenza by Mari Skaare, NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security and by Zainab H. Bangura, UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, shows the importance that NATO and the UN are attaching to CoESPU, which in 2014 started providing a new course on Gender Protection in Peace Support Operations, based on UNSCR 1325. Finally, at the national level, an important joint Directive, "Linee guida in materia di parità di trattamento, rapporti interpersonali, tutela della famiglia e della genitorialità" (Guidelines on Equality of Treatment, Interpersonal Relationships, the Protection of Family and Parenthood), was issued by the Ministry of Defence in 2012 (NAP 2014, 30). Among other examples of good practices, the NAP mentions also the setting up of a specific module on "HR and Women, Peace and Security", in the master's degree program on International Protection of Human Rights (Faculty of Political Science of Sapienza University of Rome) - in collaboration with UNICRI in 2011 (NAP 2014, 33). On the 17 of December, a bill was passed on the initiative of the CNEL¹⁹⁰, entitled "Provisions Relating to Statistics and Gender Policies", meant "to create a sort of "virtuous cycle" between social and gender statistics, and to ensure an overall improvement of statistical information and cohesion of relevant policies" (NAP 2014, 36). For what concerns the objective 4, that is the protection of the human rights of women, children and the most vulnerable groups fleeing from conflict areas and/or living in post conflict zones, the NAP recalls the voluntary contribution made by the Italian Development Cooperation in favour of the "UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women", to assist the victims of sexual violence in conflict areas in MENA countries and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Further, it underlines that sexual violence in conflict situations has increased together with the awareness that it does not affect women and girls only, but it also concerns men and boys. This plague not only brings psychological and physical trauma, but it also worsens ethnic, sectarian and other types of divisions causing instability and jeopardizing the efforts made for stabilization and peace-building. At the same time, it is necessary for women to be seen "as agents of change – and not only as victims or survivors of acts of violence" (NAP 2014, 38).

In 2006, by means of Act No. 247 of 4 August 2006, it was decided that the Peacetime Military Criminal Code would be applied in military operations abroad. In order to meet the requirements of military forces in maintaining peace and security in military operations abroad the Criminal Code for Military Operations abroad will allow, according to the NAP, to:

¹⁹⁰ The National Council for Economics and Labour (in Italian, Consiglio nazionale dell'economia e del lavoro or CNEL) is a constitutional organ provided for by Article 99 of the Italian Constitution and established in 1957. It has the task of advising the Italian government, Parliament and the regions, and promoting legislative initiatives on economic and social matters.

d. overcome the peace vs. war logic, characterizing parliamentary debate during the review to extend the mandate of our military forces deployed abroad, taking into account that Italy's commitment in this field aims to pursue peace, security and the rule of law at the international level (the same objectives pursued by the UN, NATO, the European Union and the other international organizations Italy belongs to, in keeping with international law and constitutional principles) (NAP 2014, 39).

Violence against women, according also to the previous NAP, is described as abuse of power and control, expressed through physical, sexual, psychological and economic exploitation (NAP 2014, 39). It may therefore be considered a public health issue, which must involve specialized workers to prevent the phenomenon and treat its physical and psychological consequences, this is particularly relevant considering that half of the world's refugees is made up of adult and young women who are often the victims of violence (NAP 2014, 40)¹⁹¹. Among the different practices implemented to fight violence against women, the NAP reminds us that the priorities of the Department for Equal Opportunities continue to include actions aimed at preventing and combating harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which still today represents a serious violation of women's and girls' rights, and one of the main obstacles to gender equality (NAP 2014, 42)¹⁹².

In light of the fifth objective, "5. Strengthening the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes", the London Summit of April 2013 brought greater international awareness to the need for women's effective participation, both formal and informal, in peace processes, as well as to the importance of comprising the perspectives and needs of both men and women. In fact,

the two latest UN Security Council resolutions, and particularly UNSCR 2122, go beyond the connotation of women as mere victims, giving them their rightful active role that is essential for a successful and lasting peace: they are not just victims and individuals to protect, but women who can now assert themselves as

¹⁹¹ At the local level, particularly important is the SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati), a system for protecting asylum-seekers and refugees, through which national Authorities (Ministry of the Interior and ANCI - the national association of Italian municipalities), local bodies (Regional, Municipal and Provincial authorities), and Associations, have for years been carrying out integrated reception projects for men, women and minors fleeing countries ravaged by war and persecution. Despite the limited recourse of women to SPRAR services (according to 2012 data only 23% of the services were used by women - while 77% of the same services were used by men), the majority of requests, amounting to 28% of the total, concern health-related services (NAP 2014, 42).

¹⁹² In terms of regulations, Law Decree No. 93 of 2013 included the offence, as per Article 583-bis of the Italian Criminal Code (Female genital mutilation practices), among those for which the victim is entitled to free legal aid, also regardless of income thresholds (Article 2, Paragraph 4).

protagonists and “agents of change” within their own communities, as voters, candidates and elected representatives in politics and in socio-political reconstruction, in institutional reform/institution building processes, in public administration and new institutions, in the military, in law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary (NAP 2014, 45).

A major issue is though that, nationally, top level positions are not fully accessible to women, also because of the difficulty of reconciling family and work. In this regard, Art. 51 of the Italian Constitution was reformed in order to introduce provisions to increase the number of women on company boards of directors.

Also, according to the 2014 NAP, the limited presence of women in the Armed Forces and in the Carabinieri Corps, especially in the highest ranks, is due to the fact that women’s access to this sector began only 13-14 years ago. Consequently, the policy is of the opinion that this trend will change in the future, considering that encouraging and facilitating the recruitment of women in the Armed Forces has become a national priority. In this context,

Italy commits to developing these specific initiatives:

- organizing a Gender Advisor Course at the Centre for Higher Defence Studies (CASD); - providing for certification from the SWEDINT by Italian military personnel to be employed as Advisors to Commanders on gender issues; - training civilian and military personnel through “A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Operations” courses organized by Spain and the Netherlands. Training on gender violence is also provided by the COESPU of Vicenza. (NAP 2014, 46).

In relation to the objective number 7, concerning monitoring activities and follow-up on operations,

Italy confirms its commitment to protecting the human rights of women and young girls in the context of foreign policy efforts, particularly, in international cooperation, so they may participate in, benefit from and contribute to economic and social development on an equal footing with men and young boys (NAP 2014, 48).

7.2.1.3 The third NAP (2016)

In 2016 a third NAP was introduced. According to it, Italy considers the full implementation of the WPS Resolutions as key to fully realizing human rights, peace and security; moreover, reminding us that it looks at women as “agents of change”, it stresses that:

[t]he Italian Government attaches the utmost importance to women’s role in transforming society: this is the heart of UNSCR1325 and confirms the importance that Italy attaches to preventing all forms of discrimination and violence against women, with the understanding that gender equality and women’s empowerment are key, both internationally and nationally, to preventing all forms of violence (NAP 2016, 3)

In this context, it is fundamental to take into consideration also the National Extraordinary Action Plan on Sexual and Gender-based Violence, adopted in July 2015, and the more recent National Plan of Action on the Fight against Trafficking, adopted in February 2016 (NAP 2016, 3). The NAP proceeds underlying “our commitment to implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through an effective multi-stakeholders, integrated and holistic approach, with the full involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, NGOs, private sectors, and trade unions” (NAP 2016, 4).

In his foreword, the president of the Interministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), min. Plen. Fabrizio Petri affirms that over the years, “UNSCR1325(2000) has increasingly impacted on the mindset, policies and strategies of many countries. Its transformative power with prominence given to women’s role in peace processes indicates the way forward” (NAP 2016, 5). As President of the CIDU he asserts his firm intention, in implementing this NAP:

i) to focus on the transformative value that women and girls can bring to peace processes; in this regard the newly introduced Act No. 145/2016 on international missions, by its most significant Article 1, further reinforces the Italian commitment to this aim; ii) to spare no efforts to support the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) as an effective vehicle for a far-reaching successful implementation. Further, he highlights the cross-cutting nature of this theme and the interplay between international peace and security issues, women’s equality, and human rights (NAP 2016, 5).

In particular, the third NAP identifies some specific goals: Goal No. 1 Strengthen the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes; Goal No. 2 Continue to promoting a gender

perspective in peace operations; Goal No. 3 Continue to ensuring specific training on the various and cross-cutting aspects of UNSCR 1325(2000), in particular to personnel taking part in peace operations; Goal No. 4 Further enhance women's presence in the national Armed Forces and within national Police forces, by strengthening their role in decision-making processes related to peace missions; Goal No. 5 Protect human rights of women and girls, in conflict and post-conflict areas; Goal No. 6 Increase synergies with civil society, to implement UNSCR 1325 (2000); Goal No. 7 Strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy, which in particular was divided into the two different sections of: 7.1 Engage in strategic communication and 7.2 Bolster Italy's participation in relevant fora, conferences and mechanisms, to further support the implementation of the Women, Peace & Security Agenda (NAP 2016, 6). The NAP, thence, "ensures that a gender perspective will be incorporated in all political areas supporting the concept of peace and will be adopted in all practical measures used for the promotion and protection of peace" (NAP 2016, 9). According to the policy, the ultimate aims of the actions undertaken under this NAP are:

1. To reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls, while promoting their meaningful and transformational participation in the processes of prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflict, as well as in decision-making processes, at all levels; 2. To raise awareness, educating and strengthening existing structures, on Women, Peace and Security Agenda and related issues (NAP 2016, 9).

Recognizing the importance of transparency, dialogue and a multi-stakeholder approach, it stresses that a national open-ended (inter-ministerial and participatory) Working Group (OEWG) on Women, Peace and Security, led by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights, has been established. Further, the NAP includes a set of Indicators inspired by both indicators contained in UN Secretary-General Report on Women, Peace and Security (S/2010/173) and those ones under the Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security (Doc. 2010 - 11948/10), as recently updated at the EU level (September 2016). At the same time, the very NAP points out that it is a living document, a work in progress (NAP 2016, 10).

Under the Goal No. 1. Strengthening the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes, it is reported that Italy commits to: promote the meaningful participation of women and support their increasing presence in peace process and reconstruction programs, support the effective participation of women but also engage men and boys in gender equality-related initiatives. In this context, the third action asks to create a network of women mediators from the Mediterranean area and organize events to promote the network and its members, within the framework of the Italian

membership of the UN Security Council and of the Italian Presidency of the G7 (NAP 2016, 12). The fifth action asks to support local young women's and men's participation, also for sustainable peace, specifying as indicator the number of initiatives for young leaders. The sixth one requires to promote information sharing and learning from relevant women's experience to highlight their transformative role (NAP 2016, 13).

Goal No. 2, asks to continue to promote a gender perspective in peace operations, indeed Italy commits to:

a) Further integrating a gender perspective that takes into account the differential experiences of men and women, boys and girls in conflict situations, into conflict prevention/management activities and strategies in order to promote women's role, in all stages of peace processes; b) Continue to delivering projects under international programs that reflect an analysis of the differential impact of conflict on women and girls; c) Supporting and ensuring gender advisors in peace missions (NAP 2016, 14)

so as to integrate the needs and capacities of women and girls, in relief and recovery efforts while taking into account the differential experiences of women and girls, and the differential impact of conflict on women and girls (NAP 2016, 14). Moreover, it stresses the importance of women's empowerment and national institutions capacity building, also to facilitate women's participation in reconstruction processes (thus it lists the recurring themes of women's empowerment and capacity-building; SRHR; combating VAW; but also the necessity of engaging the Italian Platform for Civil Peace Interventions (Tavolo interventi civili di pace), and increasing the number of Gender Advisers/Gender Field Advisor/Gender Focal Points) (NAP 2016, 15).

Considering Goal No. 3. Continue to ensuring specific training on the various cross-cutting aspects of UNSCR1325 (2000), in particular to personnel taking part in peace operations, Italy commits to:

a) Enhancing training on Women, Peace and Security, including relevant issues under international human rights law (IHRL), also in view of Article 1 of Act No. 145/2016; b) Further identifying specialists and trainers from various backgrounds, with expertise in women, peace and security issues; c) Enhancing the systematic inclusion of modules (which address any differential impact of armed conflict on women and girls), including codes of conduct and cultural awareness, on Women, Peace and Security, IHRL and IHL, in all Italian training

for military, Police and civilian personnel of all levels, to be deployed in conflict areas (NAP 2016, 16).

In this area, action number 2 explicitly requires developing complementarity of efforts with NATO and the EU, on issues related to "Women, Peace and Security" in the post-conflict phase, specifically with regard to "capacity-building" initiatives and providing education and training to security forces (NAP 2016, 16). Under action 4, the NAP asks to disseminate further and expanding the Roster of Experts on UNSCR1325, posted on CIDU website. Whilst action 5 demands to continue to organize Gender Advisor Courses, with the support of qualified civilian experts at CASD and to train personnel at accredited Training Institutes (such as SWEDINT). Action 6 requires to further enhance learning modules, including those for UN peacekeepers in third countries, hosted at CoESPU, as well as the ones at CIMIC and at PSYOPS (Psychological operations). Action 7 demands to map civilian and military education and training courses on WPS, available in Italy and abroad, and action 8 explicitly mentions the "Corpi Civili di Pace"¹⁹³ (NAP 2016, 17).

Goal No. 4 deals with the requirement to "Further enhance women presence in the national Armed Forces and within national Police forces, by strengthening their role in decision-making processes related to peace missions", specifically Italy commits to:

a) Increasing the representation and participation of women in Police and defense sectors, including at the senior decision-making and leadership levels; b) Incorporating further the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a key theme of engagement; c) Support engagement of men in advancing gender equality and other initiatives, which promote the principles of Women, Peace and Security (NAP 2016, 18).

In this sense the first action requires to encourage the active and meaningful participation of women in decision making and in deployments to peace operations, including by identifying and addressing barriers to full participation. The second action asks to increase female military personnel and female staff deployment and it describes as indicator the percentage of CIMIC (Civilian-Military Cooperation) projects that take into consideration consultations with local women and the number of Female Engagement Teams Deployed. Action number 4 requests to support the "Equal Opportunities

¹⁹³ Law no. 147 of 2013 (2014 Stability Law) provided for the experimental establishment of a contingent of civil peace corps intended for the training and testing of the presence of 500 young volunteers to be involved in non-governmental peace actions in conflict areas or risk of conflict or in areas of environmental emergency. The "Corpi Civili di Pace" undertake to respect the following ethical principles: nonviolence, local ownership, third party conflict, independence, human rights, non-discrimination and gender equity, accountability, transparency and integrity. The experimentation is carried out according to the regulations of the national civil service. See: <https://www.focsiv.it/servizio-civile/ccp/>

and Gender Perspective" Office while it also asks to spread the gender equality culture (NAP 2016, 18-19).

Looking at the goal No. 5 "Protecting human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict areas", Italy commits to:

a) Strengthening its efforts to prevent and protect women and girls, affected by conflict and post-conflict, from all forms of discrimination and violence, and to hold perpetrators accountable; b) Contributing to eradication of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings; c) Protecting human rights of women, children and the most vulnerable groups, affected by conflict and post-conflict, by helping to ensure their safety, physical and mental health, wellbeing, economic security, and equality (NAP 2016, 20).

On the other hand, goal No. 6. "Increasing synergies with civil society, to implement UNSCR 1325(2000)", declares that Italy commits to:

a) Further strengthening involvement and dialogue with actively-involved-on-the-matter civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's associations, domestically and internationally; b) Further facilitating cooperation and supporting local CSOs, women's associations and women human rights defenders, especially at a grass-root level (NAP 2016, 22).

In its fifth action it also requires inviting the private sector, in a multi-stakeholder approach, to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction efforts, also in view of Italy's NAP on BHR (Business and Human Rights) (NAP 2016, 23).

Goal No. 7. addresses the need for strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy and specifies that Italy commits to:

a) Developing a specific communication campaign, including through new social media, to reach out to stakeholders, as well as wider audiences; b) Strengthening relevant human rights education-related campaigns, with the inclusion of WPS-related issues; c) Increasing lesson-sharing and collecting best practices of Italian experience of Women, Peace and Security (NAP 2016, 24).

Indeed, the NAP reminds us that since ancient times, women and girls have been the most affected by war and conflict ("Turbato per metum ludicro maesti parentes virginum profugiunt, incusantes violati hospitii foedus deumque invocantes cuius ad sollemne ludosque per fas ac fidem decepti

venissent. Nec raptis aut spes de se melior aut indignatio est minor” (August 21, 749 b.C - The Sabine women) – Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, Liber I, 9.) (NAP 2016, 24).

In its second section the plan is committed to bolster Italy’s participation in relevant fora, conferences and mechanisms, to further support the implementation of the WPS Agenda. Especially, Italy commits to:

a) Continuing to engage in policy dialogue with multilateral partners, including through the UN and its various bodies, funds and programs; the European Union (EU); NATO; the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the Council of Europe (CoE); and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – to encourage the strengthening of their capacities to plan for, implement and report on issues of Women, Peace and Security in peace operations, fragile states and conflict-affected situations; b) Continuing to work with partners, including in view of upcoming tenure on the UN Security Council and under the G-7 rotating Presidency 2017, to fully implement, inter alia, zero tolerance policies on sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations and to promote the implementation of international human rights standards, especially with regard to women’s participation and in leading roles, as well as within the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; c) Continuing to support UN Secretary-General’s requests for earmarked peace-building-related resources to be destined to gender equality, and an increased presence of women in mediation and peace missions in general (NAP 2016, 25).

In its first action, it demands to advocate for WPS issues to be included in the mandates of all UN missions for peace operations and throughout the UN system, in particular UN Peacebuilding Commission, but it also demands the creation of “appropriately resourced and influential specialist teams” on WPS within peacekeeping operations¹⁹⁴ (NAP 2016, 25). In its second action, it also asks to continue to engage in political dialogue with third countries and partner agencies, to support the main UNSCRs, and relevant international human rights instruments and initiatives, including CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based

¹⁹⁴ Thus, it recalls the 2016-2020 Road-Map for the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. The Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, formally launched in 2013 by the United Kingdom and Sweden, aims to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian operations via the collective action of numerous partners, each bringing our various strengths and capacities to the table. See: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Call-to-Action-Roadmap.pdf>

Violence in Emergencies, as well as within UN Sustainable Development Goals, and within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in relation to, inter alia, OECD Council Recommendations on Digital Government Strategies (NAP 2016, 25-26). Its third action calls for further supporting initiatives to strengthen relevant capacity, especially within the EU (namely Task Force 1325), as well as within the framework of the G-7, “to promote women’s participation and representation, including in leading positions” (NAP 2016, 26). Finally, for what regards the Monitoring and Evaluation phase, according to the NAP Italy will publish an annual progress report to be prepared by the Interministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), in consultation with both civil society and the Parliament, including the inter-parliamentary group for women, women’s rights and gender equality (All-Party Women’s Caucus), established in October 2015. The open-ended Working Group (OEWG), led by CIDU, will be responsible of the implementation of the NAP, including application and monitoring (NAP 2016, 27). Within this framework, reference has to be made also to the following: the G8 Declaration “Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict” endorsed by Foreign Ministers in April 2013; the “Call to Action on Protecting Girls and Women in Emergencies” launched in 2013; the “Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative” and the International London Summit in June 2014; and the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 21. In addition, over the years, Italy has strongly supported the «UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes», developed by the (joint) Office of the UN Secretary General Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect¹⁹⁵, as well as the Code of Conduct on mass atrocities. Therefore, “[i]n keeping with its core values of rule of law, non-discrimination, respect for human rights, democracy, and good governance”, Italy is dedicated to the effective implementation of the UNSCRs on WPS (NAP 2016, 30). Mentioning also the Joint UNFPA/UNICEF Program, entitled “Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change”, the NAP reaffirms its commitment to recognize VAW as a human rights issue, to challenge de jure and de facto discrimination against women and to end impunity for the widespread use of sexual violence in war and armed conflict, which has been strengthened after 2009 when Italy launched the first G8 initiative against VAW. Since then, the support against THB, FGM, CEFM (child, early and forced marriage) and GBV has been strengthened both at the political and financial levels (NAP 2016, 31). Further, the NAP stresses the relevance of using a gender perspective when targeting health-care providers and law enforcement. In fact,

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http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf

See:

Italy's efforts to implement the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions are also linked to the overall promotion and protection of women's and girls' human rights and equality within the framework of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Italy's obligations under relevant international Conventions, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (Warsaw Convention), and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), as well as within the framework of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies and the more recent 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, especially SDG 5 and SDG 16 (NAP 2016, 32).

Finally, looking at the document “Monitoring Progress and Looking Ahead: Interactive Stock-Taking on High Level Commitments Made on Women, Peace and Security ahead of the 20th Anniversary of 1325”, it is possible to read that for the year 2020 Italy commits to develop and adopt its fourth NAP on WPS, with the active engagement of civil society and academia in its development and implementation. In addition, Italy commits to support the meaningful participation of women from the planning to the implementation phase and prioritize funding for the NAP implementation. The fourth NAP should have been discussed on March 23rd at the Open-Ended Working, but the meeting was postponed due to Coronavirus. Additionally, Italy guarantees to implement the National Strategic Plan on male violence against women (2017-2020) and further support the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network launching the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator's Network. As part of this effort, Italy will organize a series of meetings and trainings, which include: “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind” in May 2019, conference on “Remittances, the role of women, peace and development” in June 2019, a high-level seminar on the role of women and girls as drivers for peace by the end of 2019 and organize a women forum on the margins of the Mediterranean Dialogues also by end of 2019 (UN Women 2020b, 40-41).

7.2.1.4 The fourth NAP (2020)

The last and current NAP adopted by Italy was approved on the 30th of November 2020 and it starts by enlisting the different objectives of the plan itself:

Objective No.1 - Strengthen – on a continuous and lasting basis - the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes, also increasing

synergies with civil society, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda; Objective No.2 - Continue to promote a gender perspective in peace operations and enhance the presence of women, in particular in the Armed Forces and Polices Forces, strengthening their role in decision-making processes relating to peace-keeping missions and in peace conferences; Objective No.3 – Contribute to promote gender equality, empowerment and protection of women and children, especially girls and boys, as well as respect for human rights of women and children, especially girls, in conflict and post-conflict areas, increasing synergies with civil society, in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda; Objective No.4 – Strengthen strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy, by bolstering the Italian participation in relevant fora, conferences and mechanisms (eg UN system, Red Cross, OSCE, NATO, EU, OECD, Council of Europe), to further support the implementation of the WPS Agenda while continuing to ensure the enhancement of information and training at all levels, on the various cross-cutting issues of UNSCRI325(2000), in particular for the personnel participating in peace operations, including by increasing synergies with civil society and universities, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda (NAP 2020, 2).

In the following foreword by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, hon. Luigi di Maio, it is reported that:

The contemporary world is evolving rapidly. Emergencies, challenges and global changes require the international community, to set new priorities for action in all sectors. To make progress in each of them, the increasing involvement and role of women will prove decisive. Italy attaches the utmost importance to them, by acknowledging their unparalleled ability to transform society for the better. In this perspective, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is of key importance to the three Pillars of the United Nations (Peace and Security, Socioeconomic Development and Human Rights) (NAP 2020, 3).

In particular, Di Maio reaffirms the commitment of Italy to promote women's empowerment and gender equality and to increase women's participation in all spheres of economic and social life, emphasizing that

[w]e have conceived this National Action Plan as a 'living document', with the ability of adapting to the changing needs and obstacles, which still stand in the way of women's full realisation. It is important, therefore, to give continuity to the holistic, inclusive and integrated approach followed by Italy, which finds its effective and unmistakable trait in the breadth of involvement of the Third Sector, NGOs, academia, the private sector and trade unions. The first statistical evidence gathered by the United Nations confirms that the impact of the economic and health crisis caused by the current pandemic has been hardest on women, girls and children. All of this reminds us of how vital it is everyone's commitment to ensuring security, justice and equal treatment for these groups, fully achieving relevant Sustainable Development Goals (NAP 2020, 3).

Immediately after, in his introductory note, the president of the Interministerial Committee for Human Rights, min. Plen. Fabrizio Petri asserts that:

On the other hand, we are well aware of how this pandemic has had disproportionate repercussions on the most vulnerable groups, first and foremost women, and women and girls in armed conflicts even more so; in general, on the status of women and girls in all sectors, from the economy to security (NAP 2020, 4).

Thus, the NAP starts asserting that it is necessary to read the Agenda 1325 Resolutions together with the UN Secretary-General's Reports which have called attention to different issues such as:

multiple and intersecting discrimination; all forms of human rights violations affecting women in armed conflict; women's economic security; root-causes of violence that need to be addressed through adequate national capacities; removing structural barriers to participation; combating misogynistic extremism; the implications of climate change; the importance of using specific tools such as the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations (UPR); and, finally, on a "gender data revolution" on WPS - also in the light of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (NAP 2020, 7).

Similarly, the policy reminds us the relevance of the UN Secretary-General's Annual Reports on both Sexual Violence in Conflict and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and other UN Documents: the UN Strategic Results Framework on WPS, 2011-2020; the UN Women sectoral Guidelines; the Global Study-2015 on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, prepared by Ms. R. Coomaraswamy (whose

results were reported in UN Doc. S/2015/716); the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, as presented in February 2020, before the UN Human Rights Council; the UN Guidance Note on "Protection and Promotion of Civic Space", as published in September 2020. As of main importance, the current NAP describes also ILO Recommendation No.205/2017, on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience and the High Level WPS commitments pledging side-event, organised by the UK and Germany in April 2019; the international conference "Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises", held in Oslo in May 2019; and the 33rd Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, held in Geneva in December 2019. During this last event, Italy presented an open pledge to other countries to commit to ensure children's safety and fundamental rights even in situations of armed conflict. Therefore, the NAP informs us that within the policy there will be often reference to "children and in particular girls", so as to consider both the spirit of the WPS Agenda and Italy's specific commitment. Finally, the NAP calls attention to the EU Council's Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security adopted on 10 December 2018 (14943/18); the EU Gender Action Plan GAP III, 2020-2025; and the first EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019-2024 (NAP 2020, 7-8).

The text states that this NAP ensures that the gender perspective is mainstreamed into all policy areas, which support the concept of peace, and that this perspective is adopted in all practical measures aimed at promoting and protecting peace. In particular,

the Italian Government recognises the scope of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the transformative value of the role of women. In adopting this National Action Plan, Italy aims to: (i) promote and strengthen the actions undertaken by all relevant Authorities involved in the implementation of this Plan; (ii) broaden the scope of action of all stakeholders - as indicated in Security Council Resolution 2242(2015) and reiterated in subsequent relevant Resolutions; (iii) strengthen the systematization of actions based on an integrated approach. The ultimate goals of the actions undertaken within the framework of the present NAP of Italy are as follows: 1. To reduce the impact of conflict on women and children and in particular girls, while promoting their meaningful and transformational participation in the processes of prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflict, as well as in decision-making processes, at all levels; 2. To raise awareness, educating and strengthening existing structures, on Women, Peace and Security Agenda and related issues (NAP 2020, 9).

These objectives need to be achieved according to the following principles: dialogue; transparency; integrated and multi-stakeholder approach. To this end, as already observed in the previous NAPS, a national (inter-ministerial and participatory) Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Women, Peace and Security, led by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights has been set up (NAP 2020, 9).

For what concerns the indicators, these have been inspired by: the indicators contained in the Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2010/173); those contained in the Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security (Doc.2010 - 11948/10), as updated in September 2016; and the Indicators contained in the EU Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2019 -2024. Further, considering the latest UN Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security of September 2020 (UN Doc. S/2020/246) and its anticipations regarding the Indicators, the NAP declares to be ready for possible updates. The policy also states that an annual progress report will be published by the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights (CIDU), in dialogue with both civil society and other relevant stakeholders. The Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), led by the CIDU, will have the main responsibility for the implementation of the plan, also in relation to its application and monitoring (NAP 2020, 10).

Considering at this point the objective No. 1, Strengthen – on a continuous and lasting basis - the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes, also increasing synergies with civil society, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda, the plan asks to

*Promote the direct, formal and meaningful participation of women and youth in peace processes and in all decision-making processes related to peace and security, as well as to international policy, disarmament and development, also in the light of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, [...and to] Recognise women's participation and promote women's leadership and training to strengthen – on a continuous and lasting basis - the capacities of women leaders and/or women's civil society organisations in prevention, facilitation and mediation at all levels
[...]* (NAP 2020, 11).

Indeed, it also recalls strengthening the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).

Under the second objective, “Continue to promote a gender perspective in peace operations and enhance the presence of women, in particular in the Armed Forces and Polices Forces, strengthening

their role in decision-making processes relating to peace missions and in peace conferences”, the NAP asks to

strengthen a gender-sensitive and gender transformative approach to the contents of UNSCR1325(2000) in development cooperation and Armed Forces - including through participation in the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives and the EU Task Force on 1325 and the active participation in the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan, 2020-2025 (GAP III) [,] moreover it asks to further incorporate the WPS Agenda as a key engagement theme and increase the number of Gender Advisers in peacekeeping missions and in International Organizations [,] continue to organise relevant courses and for the training of Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points, with the support of qualified national and international experts [, t]rain staff at foreign training institutes designated by the UN, NATO and the EU (e.g. NCGM,12 ESDC,13 etc.) to strengthen the teaching modules included in the courses run by the CIMIC Regiment (military-civilian cooperation) and the PSYOPS Regiment (operational communication), as well as those held at the CoESPU for UN peacekeepers from third countries (NAP 2020 13-14).

It also demands to

encourage the meaningful participation of women in the whole process of deployment to peace operations - including through analysis of barriers to their full participation, to monitor internal and external communication initiatives on gender perspective, Res.1325(2000) and on the integration of male and female military personnel in the Armed Forces, but also to conduct statistical studies on this subject [, i]ncrease women's representation and participation in the Armed Forces and Police Forces, including at a senior level, by means of: communication actions aimed at women; interventions for the creation of crèches and nurseries for the children of military personnel; internal communication activities to break down stereotypes (in synergy with the actions, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, already provided for in the National Strategic Plan against male violence against women in accordance with Istanbul Convention) [,] intensify the activities of the Inter-Forces Council on Gender Perspective, an advisory body to the Chief of Defence Staff, on: implementation of Resolutions on WPS; equal opportunities; prohibition of discrimination;

*integration of male and female military personnel in the Armed Forces;
prevention and combating of all forms of violent behaviours (psychological or
physical ones) due to the gender of the victim (NAP 2020, 14).*

For what regards the third objective, “Contribute to promote gender equality, empowerment and protection of women and children, especially girls and young women, as well as respect for human rights of women and children, especially girls, in conflict and post-conflict areas, increasing synergies with civil society, in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda”, the NAP requires to

*increase efforts to prevent and protect against all forms of discrimination and to
respond to violence against women and men of all ages and children, in
particular girls, in emergency, conflict and postconflict situations - by also
enhancing the expertise of the Police and Security Forces, as well as judicial
institutions, through specific human rights trainings [... and to promote] the
rehabilitation and empowerment of women and child survivors, particularly girl-
child survivors, living in conflict and post-conflict situations, also in the light of
the Ministry of Health Guidelines (NAP 2020, 16).*

All these efforts can only be accomplished, though, by recognizing the necessity to look at “human rights and gender equality from an intercultural perspective; gender health determinants from an intercultural perspective; causes and consequences of gender-based violence from an intercultural perspective” (NAP 2020, 17). It is also important to

*[p]romote the involvement of the private sector, also on the basis of the Italian
NAP on BHR, to help women of all ages (including women with disabilities, older
women and in general women subjected to multiple challenges and difficulties,
and orphan girls, displaced women and women asylum-seekers), children and the
most vulnerable groups, being conflict and postconflict survivors, in order to
ensure their enjoyment of human rights, safety, physical and mental health, well-
being, economic security and equality [...and to] support and promote actions
also of men of all ages, in particular young men, in advancing gender equality
and other initiatives (NAP 2020, 18).*

The objective n.4 is headed “Strengthen strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy, by bolstering the Italian participation in relevant fora, conferences and mechanisms (e.g. UN system, Red Cross, OSCE, NATO, EU, OECD, Council of Europe), to further support the implementation of

the WPS Agenda while continuing to ensure the enhancement of information and training at all levels, on the various cross-cutting issues of UNSCR1325(2000), in particular for the personnel participating in peace operations, including by increasing synergies with civil society and universities, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda”. In this section, among the described actions there is that of strengthening human rights education with the inclusion of WPS-related topics (NAP 2020, 19). Moreover, the NAP recalls the First Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Safe Schools Declaration, the differential impact of armed conflicts on women and children, in particular girls and the inter-university network, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (NAP 2020, 20), but it also demands “a gender-responsive and gender-transformative approach”, in particular from the following sectors: diplomacy, development, health, peace and defence Italian CSOs, involving academia and other relevant stakeholders, while facilitating the further development of GPS (gender, peace and security) modules for young men and women, seen also the experience of the "Civil Peace Corps" and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to

promote specific training and the dissemination of the WPS Agenda-related issues among university students and young people, through the provision of dedicated teaching and training courses within the relevant degree and post-graduate courses - also aiming at a more systematic involvement of other university disciplines (e.g. anthropology, sociology and psychology) (NAP 2020, 21).

One of the experts working on the development of the fourth Italian NAP on the WPS Agenda¹⁹⁶, explained that during the 23 of April 2019 high-level WPS Commitments event, Italy committed to creating a new NAP in advance of October 2020. Considering that for this last policy plan they had to work online, the collaboration and sharing with the other stakeholders was more difficult. Nevertheless, while the first plan was mostly developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a strong component of the Defence, Cooperation and Security part, since the second plan there has been an increasing involvement of the civil society. Further, the second NAP lasted only two years so as to be updated during the 2015 anniversary. Considering that usually action plans are not financed, since they are adopted on a voluntary basis and thus it is a matter of political choice, in the third plan there were, nonetheless, indicated specific resources for the civil society. On the other hand, it is fundamental also to look at the qualitative aspect of these policies. In the development of the fourth plan, it is necessary also to consider that it is a living document, a work in progress which can always

¹⁹⁶ During an interview held on the 18 of June 2020.

be modified, there is indeed an open-ending working group where many different stakeholders are involved, included the civil society and for instance labour organizations. According to the interviewee, not only it is fundamental to locate this plan in the broader context of human rights but, considering that the Defence and the Carabinieri are strongly engaged on this theme, there is also a need for a strong synergic action. What matters is to start disseminating in a strategic way, it is indeed a gradual change which needs to be taken care of. The WPS Agenda was born exclusively at the international level, and it was actually a war to make people understand that it has absolutely not only an international level but also a domestic one. The interviewee is persuaded that the Armed Forces and the Carabinieri have a strong attention to these themes, still what is fundamental is to have a strategic communication which is able to engage all the institutions, to bring to a general awareness of this agenda.

7.2.2 Voices from the inside

According to the very interview reported in the previous paragraph, not only the periodic report of Italy about the CEDAW Convention has always given data on the condition of women but since the entry of women in the armed forces in 2000 there has been a very advanced ethical code and an office on gender perspectives within the armed forces.

It is necessary at this point to look at the Guidelines on Equal opportunities, protection of the family and parenthood released in 2017 by the Joint Chief of Staff of the Defence¹⁹⁷. In fact, the concept of equality and equal opportunities was actually sanctioned for the first time with the entry into force of the Constitution in 1948, which introduced obligations on the part of the State for the elimination of inequalities of a social and economic nature. This concept, expressly provided for in articles 2, 3, 37 and 51, however, risked remaining a mere formality if effective measures were not taken to mitigate existing economic and social inequalities. Only at the beginning of the 90s with the approval of Law no.125 of 10 April 1991, concerning positive actions for the realization of equality between men and women in the workplace, the first concrete measures were taken (Guidelines 2017, 2). Then, the aforementioned Legislative Decree no. 198/2006 ("Code of equal opportunities between men and women"), reorganized all the legislation on equal opportunities¹⁹⁸. The articles relating to the Armed

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See:

[https://www.avvocatiepartners.it/wp-](https://www.avvocatiepartners.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Pariopportunitatuteladellafamigliaegenitorialita.pdf)

[content/uploads/2017/09/Pariopportunitatuteladellafamigliaegenitorialita.pdf](https://www.avvocatiepartners.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Pariopportunitatuteladellafamigliaegenitorialita.pdf)

¹⁹⁸ The code of equal opportunities between men and women, Legislative Decree 11 April 2006, n.198, starts by affirming at the art.1:

Prohibition of discrimination and equal treatment and opportunities between women and men, as well as mainstreaming the goal of equality between women and men in all policies and activities

1. The provisions of this decree concern measures aimed at eliminating any discrimination based on sex, which has the consequence or purpose of compromising or preventing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural and civil fields or in any other field.

Forces have then been rearranged in the Code of the Military System and in the related consolidated text of the regulatory provisions, as per Legislative Decree 15 March 2010, n. 66 and D.P.R. 15 March 2010, n. 90 and subsequent amendments¹⁹⁹. Furthermore, the Legislative Decree of 25 January 2010, n. 5 (Official Gazette No. 29 of February 5, 2010) by amending Legislative Decree no. 198/06 "Code of equal opportunities", strengthens the principle of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men, providing for more severe sanctions in case of violation of these principles (Guidelines 2017, 2-3).

According to the Defence Command, thanks to the experiences carried out by the partner countries, it was possible right from the start the inclusion, in compliance with the aforementioned principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities, of female personnel in every reality of the Armed Forces. Still, this admission of female personnel gave rise to new situations, such as marriages and cohabitations among the military, which have brought issues related to family life and parenting to the attention of the Armed Forces. More recently, with the approval of the law on civilian unions, it was necessary to recall the principles of equal opportunities and the prohibition of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Thus, as already observed, the Defence General Staff, in order to make the whole organization aware of the changed reality has:

- established an organizational unit, in December 2012, as part of the Personnel Department of the Defence Staff, called the "Equal opportunities and gender perspective" unit, which in addition to representing the focal point for the implementation of the contents of the WPS Agenda in the military, has also the task of coordinating legislative, organizational, training and communication initiatives on the specific theme, it is also in charge of the application within the Armed Forces / Arma dei

2. Equal treatment and opportunities for women and men must be ensured in all fields, including employment, work and pay.

3. The principle of equality does not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.

4. The objective of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men must be kept in mind in the formulation and implementation, at all levels and by all actors, of laws, regulations, administrative acts, policies and activities.

At the art.25, it defines

Direct and indirect discrimination:

(law 10 April 1991, n.125, article 4, paragraphs 1 and 2)

1. Constitutes direct discrimination, pursuant to this title, any provision, criterion, practice, act, agreement or behaviour, as well as the order to implement an act or behaviour, which produces a prejudicial effect by discriminating against female workers or workers in reason of their sex and, in any case, any less favourable treatment than that of another worker or another worker in a similar situation.

2. Indirect discrimination under this title occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion, practice, act, agreement or conduct puts or may place workers of a particular sex at a particular disadvantage with respect to workers of the opposite sex, unless they concern essential requirements for carrying out the work activity, provided that the objective is legitimate and the means used to achieve it are appropriate and necessary.

¹⁹⁹In particular the articles 32. "Prohibitions of discrimination in enrolment in the armed forces and special forces", 33. "Prohibitions of discrimination in recruitment in the Armed Forces and in the Financial Guard Corps" and 34. "Prohibition of discrimination in military careers", have been substituted by the Legislative Decree 15 March 2010, n. 66, introducing the Code of the military system (10G0089).

Carabinieri of NATO Bi - Strategic Command Directive (Bi-SCD) 40 - 1 Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspectives in the NATO Command Structure including measures for protection during armed conflict;

- established in June 2014, pursuant to Legislative Decree no. 7/2014, descending from the law of review of the Military Instrument, an advisory body to the Chief of Defence Staff, called "Joint Council on the Gender Perspective" (composed equally by male and female personnel) which is in charge of the drafting and monitoring of the effectiveness of directives on the issues of gender perspective, integration of personnel, equal opportunities, the prohibition of discrimination and the well-being of the personnel (Guidelines 2017, p-XII).

In particular, for what regards the concept of equal treatment, it should be noted that it is realized in terms of the prohibition of both direct and indirect discrimination of the personnel. Direct discrimination is described as: when a person is treated less favourably than it would have happened to another in a similar situation; and indirect discrimination as: when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice can put people of a certain religion, belief or age, with a disability or a specific sexual orientation at a particular disadvantage compared to other people, unless this provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate purpose and the means employed to achieve it are appropriate and necessary. It should be noted, however, that art. 2, para. 6, of the Directive 76/207 / EC, amended by Directive 2002/73 / EC, on access to employment, including preventive training, allows Member States to "establish that a difference in treatment based on a specific characteristic of a sex does not constitute discrimination where, for the particular nature of the work activities in question or for the context in which they occur, it does constitute an essential and decisive requirement for carrying out the work activity, provided that the objective is legitimate and the requirement proportionate". As regards the principle of equal opportunities, the European legislation defines it as: "The absence of obstacles to the economic, political and social participation of any individual for reasons related to gender, religion and belief, race and ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation " (Guidelines 2017, 1). Thus, this concept is based on the principle of giving men and women the opportunity to make choices, both relating to the private life and the professional one, without them resulting in a form of discrimination (Guidelines 2017, 1-2).

Furthermore, the Guidelines highlight that all the military personnel must have the possibility of carrying out the same tasks, regardless of the gender they belong to. As seen above, however, particular exceptions may be envisaged, if for the particularity of the assignment to be performed, sex constitutes an essential and decisive requirement for carrying out the work activity, provided that the objective to be pursued is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate. The female staff, where

possible and without prejudice to the specific peculiarities of each component of the military instrument, must be appointed trying to avoid as much as possible to make them a small minority or, even, only one unit in the assigned body. This is in order to make it less difficult to integrate the aforementioned personnel into the life of the Departments and to avoid inconveniences of a managerial / organizational / logistic nature with possible negative repercussions on the efficiency of the Departments themselves and on the principle of equal treatment (Guidelines 2017, 3). Looking at the employment of personnel in representative activities, the guidelines underline that it is necessary to avoid the overexposure of one gender with respect to the other and to ensure, especially where events of an inter-force nature are concerned, the greatest possible heterogeneity as regards the rank of the participants, and the presence of representatives of all the Armed Forces / Arma dei Carabinieri (Guidelines 2017, 4). Further, the Guidelines underline that in any case the conduct of the soldier, regardless of the legal institution chosen to regulate his / her emotional relationship (marriage, civil union or cohabitation), must always be inspired by the values of the military status as indicated by the current regulations on military discipline (sense of responsibility, esprit de corps, dignity and decorum, demeanour and trait rules, etc.) (Guidelines 2017, 5).

The Guidelines recognize that the women in uniform have brought to light certain situations which, in their absence, were often little considered, in particular for what regards the protection of the military family and parents. In fact, in the past, more often than not, there was a form of "natural sacrifice" of women within the family in consideration of the peculiar profession of the man. Today, according to this policy, this perspective has certainly changed:

we live in a society in which female personnel increasingly play leading roles, both in terms of commitment and level of difficulty of the tasks performed, and, as regards specifically the military world, today women are employed, with relevant results, in all components of the military instrument. In our country, the role of the military interacts more and more with the family environment and, over the last decade, a series of problems related to this situation have emerged more frequently and have sometimes led the Armed Forces to have to adapt their procedures to make the particular work activity of the military as compatible as possible with the duties deriving from having formed a family (Guidelines 2017, 6).

Finally, to ensure the good performance of the military institutions, as required by art. 97 of the Italian Constitution in compliance with the obligations deriving from Italy's participation in International Organizations, and at the same time in order to guarantee the care of the "minor", the Armed Forces

and the Carabinieri will be able to adopt the appropriate and necessary measures to avoid the contextual employment, in missions outside the area, of military spouses with children up to three years of age²⁰⁰ (Guidelines 2017, 10). It has also been established the possibility of taking advantage of a period of temporary leave for female staff victims of gender-based violence (Guidelines 2017, 17).

Interestingly, Angela Boccassini²⁰¹, who is a psychologist in the Italian armed forces, explained that in order to increase the resilience of military personnel during international missions the institution provides a group psychological support before departing. In fact, during this session the personnel has the possibility to examine the dynamics that occur within their families in the delicate period of deployment abroad and to build, with the help of the psychologist, useful strategies to enhance familiar resilience, in particular to help children to live the period of the mission in the most positive way, feeling protagonists and not victims of this important experience of separation. If required, preparation activities to the mission can also be dedicated to the families of the military, in a logic according to which if the family lives well the months of employment abroad, the very military institution will benefit from the psychological well-being and operational readiness of its personnel. Also, after the mission there is the possibility of a post-deployment meeting with the Psychologist Officer. Further, according to Boccassini's experience as a psychologist employed in the operational field at home and abroad, often, female staff is employed in activities in close contact with the local population, in particular when the adoption of a gender perspective highlights the opportunity of this choice. In her opinion, though, there is no tendency to resort to mere reductionisms that attributes a-priori stereotyped characteristics to the female gender. Indeed, she contends that "as far as I have seen and experienced, everyone, man or woman, earns his or her own reputation in the very field, within the context in which he or she operates".

Further, in December 2020, the Defence Staff organized a conference called "Women and the Armed Forces. Equality in uniform" for the twentieth anniversary of the entry of women into the Armed Forces and the Guardia di Finanza. The Undersecretary Tofalo, in an article published by the ministry of Defence, after having recalled their "self-denial and spirit of sacrifice, their support in all areas of the Defence", mentioning uniformed women, emphasized that "[o]ver time there have been many steps forward in terms of gender equality and the role of women in uniform has grown as much as

²⁰⁰ The possibility of such employment for spouses who have minor children aged between 3 and 12 remains up to the assessment of each member (this age limit has been identified in compliance with the provisions of art.155 sexies of the civil code and the related jurisprudential rulings - sentence of the Court of Cassation with united sections n.222389 / 09 - which define 12 years as the presumptive age for the capacity of discernment of the minor) (Guidelines 2017, 10).

²⁰¹ During an interview held on the 9 of October 2020.

the attention towards them, all within a perspective increasingly oriented towards gender integration and the promotion of female empowerment". The piece also underlines that the entry of women in the armed forces and in the Guardia di Finanza "represented an epochal transition for our society, up to that time, mainly declined in the masculine". Moreover, the article recalls that in the same year when Italy was welcoming female personnel into the military component, the UN also fully included the gender dimension in the security sector by adopting Resolution 1325 (Women, peace and security), a real cornerstone that recognized - for the first time - the strong correlation between gender inequalities, the conditions of stability of the territories and violence, including that in conflicts (Difesa 2020b). Additionally, according to Lieutenant Colonel Rosa Vinciguerra, head of the Equal Opportunities and Gender Perspective Section of the Defence Staff, "the absence of foreclosures of positions and employment as well as roles or categories, makes the Italian recruitment model among the most advanced in the world as regards equal opportunities" (Pasqualotto 2021).

As an insider in the Italian armed forces, Lieutenant Colonel Rosa Vinciguerra²⁰², underlined how the fact that Italy has been the last country among the members of NATO to accept women in its ranks is a consequence of the strong stereotypes rooted in the Italian society, especially in connection to what is considered to be the traditional feminine role, but also of the lack of proper measures in terms of policies which could enable to coordinate family and work life. Still, being clear about the fact that the armed forces are a deeply sui-generis reality, which needs to be studied intensively in a considered effort to understand it, she is also clear about the fact that at the same time they are part of a democratic system where it is the Parliament to move and direct them, they are an instrument and do not have an autonomous will. Their main task, even if the focus of every mission, as plainly observed through this study, is more and more aimed at addressing and engaging the local population, is to guarantee security, a task for which it is yet absolutely necessary to reach a strong integration between the military and the civilian components.

Likewise, according to Lieutenant Colonel Alberto Strina²⁰³, looking at the armed forces it is necessary to consider the peculiarity of this institution which is organized along three different levels: the strategic one, the operational one and the tactical one. Indeed, the operational level conceives the operation and gives instructions to the tactical level according to the indications received from the strategic/ political level. In addition, Strina reminds that the North Atlantic Council started to adopt a CIMIC (Civil-Military) component since the end of the nineties, when, also because of the experience in the Balkans, the necessity to connect as well with the civilian component, and

²⁰² During an interview held on the 29 of October 2019.

²⁰³ During an interview held on the 8 of January 2020.

particularly the local civilian component, became more and more evident. Italy was one of the first countries to answer the call of NATO by creating the Multinational CIMIC Group, which is currently composed of personnel from six countries, namely Italy, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Portugal and Greece, with Italy making up the main part of the staff. Initially it was created as CIMIC Group SOUTH, while in the Netherlands there was the CIMIC Group NORTH, in connection with the joint commands located in the Netherlands and in Naples, but in 2009 the Northern Centre was reconfigured as a Centre of Excellence for studies and the Southern one as a multinational CIMIC Group which is an operational but also a training centre. Further, as required by NATO, every member state needs to have its own CIMIC centre. In this sense and as mentioned in the previous chapter, in a similar way to the Multinational CIMIC Group, which is made up of a national and a NATO component, the (Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units) CoESPU Centre in Vicenza, in the North of Italy, is a NATO Centre with a likewise structure but different functions. Very interestingly, Locatelli described the CIMIC as the camera of the commander. In fact, the engagement of the local population is a fundamental element in order to reach the success of the mission, thus an all-encompassing approach is required, an approach addressing the diplomatic, political, economic and civilian powers. In particular, within this context, the role of the gender advisor is to provide, thanks to a gender analysis, strategies which minimize the recourse to the use of force and the collateral damage (for instance those connected already to the mere presence of military staff in the area, such as conflict related sexual and gender violence) while maximizing the positive effects, such as the capacity of resilience of the country concerned. Thus, the role of the gender advisor is manifold and cross-cutting, it is characterized by a strong media and political relevance and by the possibility to support the rule of law and appear as a role model. He also explained that the FETs are still utilized but that they do not have any longer that significance which characterized them when they were created in 2009/2010 in the Afghan context. In fact, during the interview, he underlined that the presence of women is now taken for granted even by the local population so that it is not possible anymore to collect the same amount of information even employing female personnel.

7.2.3 Voices from the outside

Looking at the context of Italy, it is important to consider the role played by the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network which was actually promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation as a catalyst for mediation efforts in ongoing and potential crises and post-conflict stabilization processes, at an international event held at the Italian Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and International Cooperation on 26 October 2017²⁰⁴. This network is part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, which was launched in 2019 in order to bring together six different networks: Nordic Women Mediators (NWM), African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise-Africa), Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC), Arab Women Mediators Network (AWMN), and the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators (SEANWPNM)²⁰⁵. Its main aim is to press policy and decision-makers to implement UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions and “create meaningful spaces for women to influence global peace and security”. In particular, UN Women produced a documentary on the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network²⁰⁶, in collaboration with the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Women in International Security Italy (WIIS). The film represented the critical contributions given by women to mediation, displaying examples from Cyprus and Libya (UN Women 2020a, 30). The initiative for a Mediterranean Women Mediators Network strives to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts, supporting the appointment of women mediators at local and international level in the Mediterranean area. Indeed, according to the very website “women mediators can bring strategic knowledge and contribute to conflict resolution and sustainable peace”.

Ms Irene Fellin²⁰⁷, previous president of WIIS (Women in International Security) Italy and researcher at the International Affairs Institute (IAI) in gender, peace and security, currently NATO Secretary General’s new Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, affirmed that in Italy there was no reality engaged in the WPS topic within the civil society, except for the work of Ms Luisa Del Turco and for some initiatives in the international collaboration sector. Consequently, she created WIIS Italy as a network of women working in international security, as a platform for advocacy and awareness raising. In fact, WIIS Global is a reality which is strongly focused on the WPS Agenda even if it was founded in 1987, quite before UNSCR 1325. Initially it was interested mostly in the theme of leadership, while it started its work around gender only later. The Italian branch, WIIS Italy, was born in April 2016 and is working on issues related to women and international peace and security. Even if the target of the organization is mostly women and young female professionals, Ms Fellin believes that in the emerging security challenges, it is necessary to bring a gender perspective shared both by men and women. Likewise, this organization works as a bridge between the civil

²⁰⁴ See: <https://www.iai.it/en/ricerche/mediterranean-women-mediators-network--mwmn>

²⁰⁵ See: <https://www.globalwomenmediators.org/about/> (accessed 23/02/2022).

²⁰⁶ Which at the moment includes the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Egypt, France, Jordan, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Monaco, Montenegro, Palestine, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

²⁰⁷ During an interview held on the 12 of November 2020.

society and the institutions, in fact also the civil society needs to support the institutions. Further Ms Fellini has been working since the beginning with the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, in collaboration with IAI. In her opinion, the networking part is fundamental, for instance for women to become leaders, but then they need to get out of this female only network and play also in the male club. For what concerns the Italian system, she identifies a lack of structure, a scenario where there is no strategic and political vision, but the succession of many ad hoc events singularly supported. The Interministerial Committee on human rights, for instance, does not have a real expertise on this specific topic which, according to her, should be under the administration of the Foreign Affairs Office. In fact, although the Italian NAP should be connected to the political priorities of Italy, there is no mechanism for monitoring and reporting, there are in fact some indicators, but it would be necessary to truly understand where they want to go. Thus, there should be a prior political reflection, instead she sees no coordinated vision, no control boot. Still, she sees the fourth NAP, which at the time of the interview was under development, as part of a positive process, even if there is still a lot of rhetoric. The very UN is a huge bureaucratic machine where sometimes there is the perception that things are being done because they have to be done. As a matter of fact, she affirms that the problem is not one of discrimination but one of a lack of women in key positions. In this sense the UN has taken some real steps and it has led by example, Guterres has reached a 50% women and 50% men leadership in the UN.

Ms Ida Caracciolo²⁰⁸, professor of International Law, Judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and legal expert for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported that while teaching in the context of different training courses organized by the Italian armed forces she found an environment open also to the possibility of criticism and genuinely interested in learning. She acknowledges that Italy is really engaged in peacekeeping activities and that the Italian way to peacekeeping is strongly based on the concept of human security. There is a lot of interest in human rights, women's rights and humanitarian law, a genuine interest towards aspect of so-called soft security. On the other hand, a problem could be that of actually applying the theoretical knowledge on the field because of practical exigences which could interfere. Finally, considering the role played by international humanitarian law in the context of the WPS Agenda, she recognized the relevance of the feminist criticism for its terminology, making use of formulas such as the protection of women's honour, which considers and protects women only in their role as mothers or expectant mothers or as prisoners of war, namely because of their specific role as protectors of life. On the other hand, she reflected on the fact that to open this Pandora's box can bring to enormous risks, that is to

²⁰⁸ During an interview held on the 20 of October 2020.

lose the very results reached so far. As a matter of fact, the Geneva Conventions were negotiated in the 1949 when many states around the world were colonies (the decolonization process started in the 1960s), whereas the 1977 protocols were negotiated with strong difficulties and nowadays it would not even be possible to find an agreement. Humanitarian Law has undoubtedly many limits but it has also brought up principles which could not even be conceived during the second world war. Additionally, its norms have also been interpreted in an evolutive way, they are not perfect in themselves, which would be a “chimera”, a fantasy, but there is the possibility for them to be interpreted in an evolutive way. Instead, trying to change the very norms could actually end out in a retrogression.

On the other hand, during an interview with an expert of the Italian Armed Forces²⁰⁹, the armed forces were described in terms of realities which are very closed, as clearly represented by the very walls which surround the military bases and characterized by a complete lack of dialogue with the civil society. Further the interviewee brought the attention to the importance of the terms used and their meanings, in particular for what regards the very notion of peace and consequently concepts such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement, for instance, in the ‘90s the USA used to talk of military operations other than war (MOOTW), even if concretely it was war. Likewise, by now the Italian armed forces are a professional reality and the women employed in it are professional staff as well, trained to make war. As a matter of fact, from a sociological perspective, it is us, the society, to generate security, by giving it a definition and its meaning. The expert points out that the WPS Agenda is actually very weak, being based on a form of cultural vulnerability, in fact during all these years there have been no reflections especially within the Italian academic institutions about it. The interviewee talks of a habit-forming, where the social dialectic is frozen and there is no critical thinking. There was a normalization process which transformed the term war in the paradigm peace and war into the more acceptable and even “politically correct” term security, so that the very notion of war has been eliminated from the debate, while remaining the daily reality for soldiers on the ground, even more than ever. The interviewee also criticizes the fact that even if UNSCR 1325 concerns the armed forces not only externally but also internally, in terms of gender relations there is a lack of elaboration of a concrete strategy, particularly for what regards abuses. Indeed, there is a general sense that the Italian armed forces do not require specific and explicit rules on this topic because of the specific characteristics of the Italian context which implicitly already deals with it. Because of this attitude, there was not even the development of a procedure for sexual harassment and violence to surface and being denounced. There is then no transparency and no official

²⁰⁹ During an interview held on the 4 of February 2020.

methodology in the gathering of data and considering that the official numbers are so low, this means that something is not working properly. Rather than the denunciation itself, the problem is to support the emergence of the denunciation, seen also the internal hierarchical order on which the armed forces are built. On the other hand, the soldiers are now very competent and the women also very educated, they have a function of interface with the society, they are a matter of communication. Yet whilst the appearance has changed, the substance has not, which is not only an issue in terms of the internal quality of the armed forces but also for its repercussions on the civil society. All the same, looking also at the necessity of a democratic control of the armed forces, which belongs to the civil society, since the armed forces have a mandate from the civil society, there is a responsibility on the part of the very civil society, there is no counterpart. The armed forces are in a subordinate position in relation to the civil society but what does the civil society says on the matter?

Professor Cristiana Carletti²¹⁰, who teaches International Law, underlined that even if within NATO the contribution to the work about the WPS Agenda is completely on a voluntary basis and member states do not provide a lot of funds for it, still they do get a lot back in terms of reputation. Likewise, she highlighted the importance of being clear about the concepts being utilised, for instance a concept such as gender mainstreaming can mean everything and nothing, if we do not start with a shared definition, and can also have a very different interpretation according to the context, such as the specific institution taken into account. It is fundamental to start from the definitions, it is necessary to know what you are talking about in order to know what you are doing.

7.2.4 Voices from the field

Lieutenant Colonel Lucia Locatelli²¹¹ spoke about her experience in Lebanon where, in regard to the difficulty of accessing the female local population, the commander decided to make the most of his female staff, bringing female personnel during the meetings so as to encourage the participation of local women. Further, the commander created an initiative called Women and Culture which was aimed at getting to know the reality of Lebanese women in the framework of an informal environment in order to understand their perspective, thus applying a gender perspective. As part of this project, it was also launched an activity called “Parliamo Italiano”, Let’s speak Italian, directed at teaching the Italian language to Lebanese people. Since the teacher was a man, only boys joined the initiative, so Locatelli was asked to teach Italian to girls. According to her, the communication was facilitated also by her young age. She even obtained the permission from her commander to invite the local women

²¹⁰ During an interview held on the 5 of June 2020.

²¹¹ During an interview held on the 8 of January 2020.

in the base camp, thanks to this opportunity a closer relationship between the Italian soldiers and the local population was developed. In fact, as she reported, local women used to say that “those soldiers were the soldiers of Lucia”, referring to her by her first name. All of this happened in 2007, before the creation of any FET, as part of a strategy of making use of the female component in order to connect with the local population and in particular with the female local population. Still, she highlighted that what mattered in order to foster this relationship was not only the gender but also the culture, in fact she mentioned the fact that the Danish armed forces sent some female personnel in the hospitals during her time there but that they were not able to interact with women and children because of the very different cultural identities. On the other hand, Locatelli found the Italian and Lebanese cultures as being much more similar. Still, she pointed out that Muslim countries are very different among them, indeed she found Lebanese women to be much more emancipated than Afghan women. Consequently, it was not possible to recreate the same initiative in Afghanistan when she was there in 2009.

In this sense it is relevant to look also at the research collected by Louise Olsson and Johan Tejpar on Operational Effectiveness and UN Resolution 1325- Practices and Lessons from Afghanistan which looked at different NATO’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and was released in 2009. In particular, the Italian PRT in Herat was a civil-military administrative body in charge of assisting the local institutions through the conduct of CIMIC activities (cooperation between civilians and military), under the responsibility of Italy since 2006. When the report was published in 2009, Italy did not have a National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 to guide its work in the province (in fact, as seen above the first one was adopted in 2010), yet the Italian Government was repeatedly expressing its support for the UNSCR 1325 (Olsson and Valenius 2009, 58). The study highlighted how there was a need for more female soldiers, especially in the CIMIC Unit that was more in contact with the local community, still, since Italy admitted women in the military only in 2000, there were overall not enough female soldiers, in particular in the officer corps, and there were no protocols for pregnancy and maternity leaves. Hence, in PRT Herat, UNSCR 1325 was not officially implemented, still an indirect approach was adopted (Olsson and Valenius 2009, 67-68).

Interestingly during an interview in the context of the Croatian Armed Forces the relevance accorded to the culture of belonging was likewise outlined. In an interview with a military psychologist²¹², what emerged is that the armed forces are a men world characterized by a specific context guided by the principles of military readiness and effectiveness in order to reach military success in operations, on the other hand the informant defined the patriarchal way of thinking in Croatia as similar to the

²¹² During an interview held on the 28 of January 2020.

one of Italy, as probably connected to the influence of the Catholic Church. She pointed out how an issue is the fact that usually when dealing with integrating a gender perspective the focus is only on operations and not on domestic situations, that is also on everyday military activity. In fact, it is not possible to have gender equality in operations if it is not already there in the country. Further, it is not possible to have gender equality in the workplace if the employees cannot conciliate family and work life. Interestingly, she made reference to the concept of benevolent sexism, in fact it is possible to express sexism also by means of “positive” terms, but it still maintains sexist beliefs and discrimination. It is based on an essentialist view of women, on paternalism. After defining gender equality as “the possibility to choose what you want”, she highlighted again the importance of implementing a gender perspective. Considering that the military job is the same but that the societies are very different and likewise the cultures, there can be very different ways of communication and subjective perceptions of sexual harassment, in multinational environments it is therefore easy to have misunderstandings. Bearing in mind also the specificity of the military work, she esteems it unrealistic to reach the same number of men and women in the armed forces.

7.3 The Swedish framework

As we have already reiterated and as will become increasingly clear many paradoxes emerge in this study, among these Sweden is surely the paradox par excellence. As clearly summarized by Alma Persson and Fia Sundevall (2019, 1051): “From an international perspective, the Swedish case is somewhat of a paradox”, the reasons for such a statement will be better analysed throughout this section. In fact, we have already mentioned Sweden representation as a leading supporter of gender mainstreaming in security policies, not only in the OSCE, but also in NATO and in the EU (Wright 2016, Joachim et al. 2017), which also reflects strong equality values and gender mainstreaming agenda on the domestic level (Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2018, 15-16). On the other hand, as we will examine, the results within the armed forces are still inadequate.

Indeed, notwithstanding the work done by Charlotte Isaksson who was chosen as the first gender advisor in the SAF, building the whole gender architecture of this organization, yet the SAF has been met with many challenges not only in recruiting and promoting women but also people of different backgrounds and sexual orientations (Egnell 2019, 59). In particular, in 2017 the #MeToo Movement touched even the SAF and Sweden’s biggest daily newspaper “Dagens Nyheter” published an appeal

signed by 1768 women in the armed forces reporting anonymous accounts of abuse, ranging from rape to toxic leadership (Egnell 2019, 65).

Still, for what regards Sweden it is fundamental to take into account also its specific and peculiar legal context²¹³ which is directly connected to the understanding of feminism in Sweden in terms of State feminism. As observed, this is a sui-generis form of feminism, first described by Hernes (1987), often used in relation to the gender equality policies of the Nordic countries directly supported and sponsored by the state government. In 1999, the law on prohibition of purchase of sexual service was adopted, that is a gender-neutral law criminalizing the person that purchases sexual services from another person, not the person selling the services in the view that “prostitution is bad for the individual as well as the society”, even if the sex-worker is not the criminal (Stenberg 2011, 364). In fact, the law is directed to the protection of the sex-worker, seen also that prostitution is often linked to trafficking, physical and sexual abuse and drug trade. An evaluation of the law published in 2010 showed that the prohibition to purchase sexual service has had a big effect to prevent prostitution and trafficking. Additionally, the Swedish Government adopted an action plan against prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes in 2008 (Stenberg 2011, 364).

7.3.1 The Swedish NAPs on the WPS Agenda

7.3.1.1 *The first NAP (2006)*

According to the first NAP, adopted in 2006, “[t]he participation of women and their enjoyment of human rights are a prerequisite for sustainable peace, development and democracy”. In fact, UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was adopted unanimously by the Security Council in October 2000, thus affirming that strengthening women’s participation in conflict prevention and conflict management is of central importance for the promotion of international peace, security, development and human rights (Swedish NAP 2006, 1). UNSCR 1325 highlights “the fact that women can both influence and be affected by armed conflicts, that women are actors but may also be particularly vulnerable”, further “[u]se is not made of their experience and knowledge in conflict prevention operations or in connection with the reconstruction of conflict-affected societies” (Swedish NAP

²¹³ A new policy was adopted in 2010 concerning women’s rights and gender equality in Swedish international cooperation. The policy puts focus on four areas; 1) Women’s political participation and influence; 2) Women’s economic agency and working conditions; 3) Sexual and reproductive health and rights; and 4) Women’s security, including the eradication of all forms of sexual violence and trafficking. Another relevant policy is the Policy for Security and Development in Swedish development cooperation, adopted in 2011. The above-mentioned National Strategy for Swedish Participation in International Peace and Security Promoting Operations is also relevant since it gives the guiding principles of Swedish participation in international missions. As already discussed, the strategy states that, basically, it is about defending universal norms and values, and UNSCR 1325 is specifically mentioned as an important aspect of this. A final important policy, more relevant in the national Swedish context, is the Discrimination Act (2008, 567), which states that all employers have to conduct a target-oriented work to actively promote the same rights and opportunities in the work regardless of sex, ethnicity or religion. The employer has to establish an equality plan every third year (Stenberg 2011, 351-352).

2006, 1). In order to achieve the aims of UNSCR 1325, not only increased direct participation by women is required, but also “all actors involved in work for peace and security must adopt a stronger gender and gender equality perspective”. In this view, the Swedish Government has based his work on UNSCR 1325 on a holistic view of security, development and human rights (HR), considering also that “[t]he link between development, security and human rights (HR) is of central importance to Sweden’s foreign and security policy and also to its policy for global development (PGD)”, which, at the same time needs to be always informed by the concept of gender equality (Swedish NAP 2006, 2). The implementation of UNSCR 1325, according to the Swedish NAP, can also help to fight impunity, in fact it is necessary to “include a gender power analysis and give particular attention to the social, financial, legal and political status and vulnerability of women and girls” (Swedish NAP 2006, 2). Thus, the core concepts which are expressly stressed are: gender equality, development and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls. Further, the NAP underlines that Sweden’s work on UNSCR 1325 “complements and is part of the Government’s action to incorporate a gender equality perspective into all policy areas and all activities carried out by the Government Offices”, together with a special plan of action on human rights (2005) and a new policy for its international action on sexual and reproductive health and rights (2005). Further, Sweden will adopt an action plan against prostitution and human trafficking, particularly of women and children, for sexual purposes (Swedish NAP 2006, 2-3). The policy also underlines that in 2004 a special working group under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and with participants from the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministries of Defence, Justice, and Industry, Employment and Communications was established in order to provide for a more systematic, effective and coordinated implementation of UNSCR 1325. In fact, the group promoted projects, seminars and other activities on UNSCR 1325 and the elaboration of a NAP. The policy also calls attention to the fact that “[t]he Swedish Armed Forces has started a more conscious initiative to increase the number of women conscripts and officers able to participate in international operations”, in particular by means of projects like GenderForce, meant to incorporate a gender perspective into international operations. Similar efforts have been made by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the National Police Board, particularly to increase the proportion of women in the Swedish police contingents in peace support (Swedish NAP 2006, 3). Also, Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) has embraced gender equality issues in its work and likewise the Folke Bernadotte Academy in its planning and implementation of training courses and in special projects. Additionally, the NAP reminds that an ethical network made up of Swedish organisations and authorities has elaborated a code of conduct for personnel in international operations and that Sweden has strongly contributed to the creation of a code of conduct and an action programme for implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the European

Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) including its concrete actions by, for instance, appointing a gender equality adviser, but also within the framework of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The country has also contributed to the implementation of the NATO/EAPC antitrafficking policy. Together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) the Swedish Government has organised two international meetings on gender justice, besides, together with South Africa, it is co-chairing the global initiative “The Partners for Gender Justice in Conflict Affected Countries” and a special working group has been appointed under the International Humanitarian Law Delegation in the Government Offices to look further into gender aspects of international humanitarian law. At the same time the policy recognizes that “[m]ost of the measures taken are starting points for processes that require continued commitment” (Swedish NAP 2006, 5). Thus,

[t]he importance and value of action to strengthen women’s participation and security must be made clear and seen as an integral and necessary element if efforts to promote peace and development are to meet the goals set up. The mutual dependence of the national and international level must be made clear, as must the special responsibility that countries have in their capacity as members of international organisations, donors and contributors of troops and police
(Swedish NAP 2006, 5).

Accordingly, the NAP has been developed by means of the collaboration among various interested parties: government authorities, NGOs, research institutions, international organisations and other countries, in fact views and ideas have been formulated in a comparative study, an approach which will also characterize the implementation of the action plan.

The overall goal of the action plan, and the measures that it lays down, is to make visible and strengthen women’s participation, power, influence, importance, security and enjoyment of their human rights before, during and after conflicts.
Resolution 1325 must be an integral and natural part of both regular and strategic work for peace and security in a broad sense. Increased participation by women and a gender equality perspective must be secured in the areas covered by the Resolution. In the long term, the plan aims to secure women’s participation and enjoyment of human rights and also to incorporate a consistent gender equality perspective into conflict prevention, conflict management and humanitarian operations and other peace support operations, security-building operations. Sweden will continue to be at the forefront in terms of both national

*implementation and action to move developments forward at international level
(Swedish NAP 2006, 6).*

So that “[w]omen in conflict areas will participate fully and on an equal footing with men at all levels in mechanisms and institutions for conflict prevention, crisis management, peace building, humanitarian operations and other efforts during a post-conflict phase” (Swedish NAP 2006, 6). In order to reach these goals, national and local initiatives will be supported focusing especially on women’s own analysis of the need for protection “that enhance security and create opportunities for participation without limiting the freedom of movement of women and girls”, additionally Sweden will strive for the participation of more women in international peace support and security-building operations within the framework of the UN, the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Euroatlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace (EAPC/PfP) and other regional organisations of which Sweden is a member or with which Sweden cooperates (Swedish NAP 2006, 6-7). Yet, “[i]t is necessary to move from words to action” (Swedish NAP 2006, 7), that is a comprehensive commitment which involves all ministries in the Government Offices that are engaged in peace support and security building activities, human rights and/or gender equality issues (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Defence, Justice, and Industry, Employment and Communications) as well as the authorities that train and deploy personnel for international operations or carry on the relevant research activities (primarily the Swedish Armed Forces, the National Police Board, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sida, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the National Defence College), but also Swedish embassies and other representations and the cooperation with active NGOs (Swedish NAP 2006, 7-8). Thence, the Government will set up a delegation on UNSCR 1325 to meet twice yearly under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in order to exchange information, discuss special issues and follow up the action plan and special focus will be on empirical analyses (Swedish NAP 2006, 8). Accordingly, in order

*to achieve more active Swedish capacity for conflict management and resolution
[... w]hen Swedish women and men are directly involved in peace processes and
work for peace as, for example, mediators or in similar functions, special
attention will be given to these issues [...] When Swedish delegations visit conflict
areas, the programme should include talks with women and representatives of
women’s organisations (Swedish NAP 2006, 9).*

Reminding how much it is important to have an overall policy coherence, the document continues declaring that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida and other relevant ministries and authorities will continue to incorporate a gender equality perspective into action to promote development, including

development cooperation in potential or current conflict areas, in order to help strengthen the participation of women and girls and their enjoyment of human rights, power and influence. Attention should be given to issues concerning education for women in conflict areas in order to strengthen their chances of self-determination and financial independence in this way. As co-chair of “The Partners for Gender Justice in Conflict Affected Countries”, the Swedish Government is also responsible through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for taking specific measures in a number of conflict-affected and post-conflict countries and also for developing practical methods (Swedish NAP 2006, 10). The NAP also reminds us that the Stockholm Initiative for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), coordinated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, will pay special attention to issues concerning the social, economic, legal and political status and special situation of women and girls, reflecting UNSCR 1325 in concrete measures (Swedish NAP 2006, 10-11). To achieve results, “Sweden should both set a good example and work for the deepening of statistical and analytical work” (Swedish NAP 2006, 12), whilst “[t]he exchange of experience between the Nordic countries should be intensified” (Swedish NAP 2006, 14). The Swedish Government will also work for the implementation and follow-up of the UN system’s joint Action Plan for Resolution 1325 adopted in 2005 (Swedish NAP 2006, 15) and will continue its work in the New York-based support group for Resolution 1325. “It is, though, paramount to consider that the plan is a living document which will be developed to meet new needs as they are identified as well as to draw on experience gained and lessons learned” (Swedish NAP 2006, 17).

7.3.1.2 The second NAP (2009)

In the second NAP, adopted in 2009, it is underlined that “women and girls are particularly vulnerable in conflict situations, meaning that they require increased protection” and thus, in order “to promote women’s status and equality”, UNSCR 1325 has a primary role, also considering that it underlines the main role of women and gender equality issues in achieving international peace and security.

The full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and peace-building contributes to international peace and security. It also contributes to democracy, increased respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, development and poverty reduction

(Swedish NAP 2009, 3).

As observed in the previous NAP, also this policy highlights that: “[t]he starting point for the resolution is the fact that women are affected by and can affect armed conflicts. Women in conflict and post-conflict areas are actors but are also particularly vulnerable”, as remarked also by UNSCR 1820 on the link between sexual violence and security (Swedish NAP 2009, 4). Considering the first

NAP, which covered the period 2006–2008, this document asserts that “Sweden was one of the first countries to adopt a national action plan and the Swedish plan has attracted interest and inspired several other countries and international organisations”²¹⁴, thus, “[i]t is a natural part of the Swedish Government’s ambitions that Sweden should continue to lead the way in efforts to implement Resolution 1325” (Swedish NAP 2009, 6). Further, Sweden is also a member of the World Bank’s Advisory Council for the Gender Action Plan and contributes to the World Bank Adolescent Girls Initiative for education in poor, fragile and post-conflict countries and within the context of OSCE, it has seconded an expert on UNSCR 1325 to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (Swedish NAP 2009, 6-7). The NAP underlines that the work on UNSCR 1325 is based on a comprehensive approach to security, development and human rights but also that “[i]t has been arduous work, partly because these issues are given varying levels of priority in different countries” (Swedish NAP 2009, 8). Overall, the main three goals of this NAP are:

-a considerably larger proportion of women to participate in international peace-support and security-building operations, within the framework of regional and international organisations, and operations to be implemented with a gender perspective in order to increase their effectiveness; - the protection of women and girls in conflict situations to be strengthened and based on analysis in which women participate actively; -women in conflict areas to participate fully and on equal terms with men at all levels in mechanisms and institutions for conflict prevention, crisis management, peace-building, humanitarian operations and other initiatives during a post-conflict phase (Swedish NAP 2009, 9).

Moreover, the implementation of the plan works at three different levels: -nationally, -in the EU and regional organisations such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe, NATO/the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and Nordic cooperation, and -globally, above all in the UN, so that “Sweden will continue to be a leading nation, both with regard to national implementation and in driving developments at the international level” thanks to the common effort of all actors and of both women and men (Swedish NAP 2009, 10). Thus, the policy mentions at the national level the work of the ministries and departments in the Government Offices engaged in peace-support and security-building activities, human rights and/or gender equality issues (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Defence, Justice and Integration and Gender Equality) as well as the agencies that train and deploy personnel to international operations or carry out relevant research activities (primarily

²¹⁴ The first country to adopt a NAP on the WPS Agenda was Denmark in 2005, see: <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/> (accessed 05/08/2022)

the Swedish Armed Forces, the National Police Board, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sida, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, the National Defence College, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the National Courts Administration and the Swedish Prosecution Authority) (Swedish NAP 2009, 11). In military peace-keeping and security-building operations, according to the NAP, “[w]omen’s skills are to be utilised”, thus it is important the collaboration of the Swedish Armed Forces and National Service Administration, likewise in police peace-keeping and security-building operations, it is especially important the collaboration of the National Criminal Police (Swedish NAP 2009, 12). Reminding that the cooperation between those agencies that deploy personnel, representatives of civil society and the Government Offices is to increase with regard to exchanging information, knowledge and experiences concerning aims, purpose and implementation of UNSCR 1325. Further, this NAP mentions the project GenderForce, which was concluded at the end of 2007 but continues to exist as a network for cooperation between agencies concerned and NGOs, as a good example, where a leading role is played by the Folke Bernadotte Academy. Considering that “Swedish men and women who represent the international community are to be encouraged to bear these issues in mind”, not only all Swedish personnel in peace support and humanitarian operations must know UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, the conditions specific to the operation, the relevant legislation and ethical issues (Swedish NAP 2009, 13), but also the Swedish delegations must include discussions with women, must be constituted of both women and men and must cover issues concerning women’s participation, human rights, humanitarian rights and security, as well as prevention of abuse and penal measures against perpetrators (Swedish NAP 2009, 14). Considering the effort of the Swedish Government, at the EU level, to ensure that gender advisers are given the necessary resources, powers and support, the plan highlights that “[r]esponsibility for integrating a gender perspective lies within existing leadership and management structures”, thus “gender equality advisers must be appointed at the same time as other leaders and advisers and participate in planning, information gathering and force generation conferences” (Swedish NAP 2009, 16-17). Further, at the regional level, Sweden is also working to have a better reporting from EU missions and follow-up on UNSCR 1325-related issues, encouraging the development of the “lessons learned process” and integrating these issues into the mandate for the exploratory initiatives, six-monthly follow-up reports and final evaluations of missions. Additionally, Sweden supports the existing ban on the purchase of sexual services by personnel involved in ESDP operations (Swedish NAP 2009, 17). Looking at the context of the Nordic cooperation, this NAP acknowledges that in a joint effort Sweden and the other Nordic countries have greater opportunities to influence the implementation of the resolution in several different regional organisations and cooperation projects. Within the OSCE, the document makes special mention of the ministerial

decision of 2005 on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, with a particular focus on the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which includes UNSCR 1325 and the implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (Swedish NAP 2009, 19). Interestingly, in the OSCE 2014 guidance note on Integrating a Gender Perspective into Internal Oversight within Armed Forces, it is mentioned as fifth example exactly the case of the Swedish Armed Forces' Code of Conduct for Personnel on International Missions²¹⁵.

Further, Sweden will contribute to NATO peace-support operations in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, EAPC /Partnership for Peace (PfP) (Swedish NAP 2009, 20). Considering the UN and the role of Sweden “[a]s a committed member state and active participant in peace-support activities” (Swedish NAP 2009, 21), the NAP underlines the need for the establishment of the function of civilian observers in UN peace-support operations which could broaden the recruitment base and increase the proportion of women in operations, improving also the opportunities for contact with the female section of the civilian population (Swedish NAP 2009, 22). Still, “[m]en in senior positions have a particular responsibility to include women and facilitate female participation” (Swedish NAP 2009, 24).

7.3.1.3 The third NAP (2016)

The third NAP, adopted in 2016, begins by making a clear reference to Sweden's feminist foreign policy, which was established in 2014 after many years that Sweden was already promoting gender equality and human rights nationally and internationally (Government Offices of Sweden). Indeed, “Sweden's feminist foreign policy has a clear focus on supporting women as actors for peace and

²¹⁵ “The Swedish Armed Forces' Code of Conduct, adopted in 2004, was based on the Ethical Rules and Codes of Conduct developed by a number of stakeholders, including the armed forces working group on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Criminal Investigation Department, the Swedish International Development and Co-operation Agency and the National Courts Administration, as well as a number of Swedish non-governmental organizations. The Code of Conduct states clearly that buying sexual services is forbidden when working abroad, including paying bills, rent, etc., in exchange for sexual services. It forbids visiting places such as strip clubs “when it can provide support to criminal acts such as the sex-trade and other criminal activities”. All soldiers and officers are obliged to sign the Code of Conduct to demonstrate that they have understood and commit to adhere to it.

Training:

To generate awareness on this topic and prepare people in positions of command to enforce the Code of Conduct, the Swedish armed forces, in co-operation with the women's civil society organization Kvinna till Kvinna, delivers training on gender, prostitution and human trafficking to all personnel to be deployed aboard.

Enforcement:

Serious violations of the Code of Conduct are dealt with according to penal law, while less serious misdemeanours are subject to disciplinary measures handled within the chain of command. Soldiers who have sexual relations with local women are sent home. Former Brigadier of the Army Tactical Command in Kosovo, Bjorn Erisson, has described how prior to his deployment he had heard rumours about human trafficking and prostitution. He contacted his legal adviser and the military police commissioner, and ordered them to investigate. The rumours proved to be true; three soldiers were discharged, sent home and convicted for visiting prostitutes” (Bastick 2014, 39).

security. The influence and meaningful participation of women in peace and security is both about rights and effectiveness” and, accordingly, Sweden’s NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions on WPS is an “agenda for change”, still, “[t]o promote change courage, perseverance and political will are prerequisites” (Swedish NAP 2016, 3). In particular,

Sweden will support women as actors for peace and security by: -making visible and strengthening women’s influence and meaningful participation in peace processes and in peacebuilding and statebuilding; -addressing root causes of conflict and violence and including women and men in conflict prevention work; -strengthening protection of women and girls from violence in conjunction with and following armed conflict; -reinforcing the gender perspective and expertise in the work for peace and security (Swedish NAP 2016, 3).

It also remarks that the WPS Agenda resolutions “establish that women’s increased participation – in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, and in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts – is a prerequisite for attaining sustainable international peace and security [...] taking account of the different needs and perspectives of women, men, girls and boys” (Swedish NAP 2016, 6). The policy also explains that in order to arrive to the adoption of Sweden’s third NAP there was a broad consultation process in Sweden and in five conflict and post-conflict countries (Swedish NAP 2016, 7). Considering that global security challenges include more and more intrastate conflicts but also new threats such as increased violent extremism and extensive, prolonged humanitarian crises, when working for sustainable peace and security it is necessary to consider entire populations and communities.

Further, the NAP underlines that

[w]omen perform peace work on a daily basis alongside the formal peace processes, often in conflict-stricken situations where they might be exposed to threats, violence and abuse. This peace building and conflict prevention work often takes place without formal support and with limited visibility. It is important that women gain greater political and public influence because a lack of women in the peace negotiation phase also adversely affects women’s opportunities to take part in political, legal and socio-economic development processes in the post-conflict phase. When women’s right to political participation and influence is not respected, peace agreements and peacebuilding lose legitimacy, quality and sustainability (Swedish NAP 2016, 9).

Thus, the policy clearly states that “[t]he overall Swedish priority is therefore to make visible and strengthen women’s influence and meaningful participation as actors for peace and security”, by means of a holistic approach to peace and security and an intersectional perspective informed of the fact that “women, men, girls and boys are not homogeneous groups; instead, they have different identities, needs, influence and living conditions” (Swedish NAP 2016, 9)²¹⁶. Recalling the importance of recurring to dialogue, trust-building measures and conflict prevention work (Swedish NAP 2016, 11), the NAP acknowledges that it is also necessary to “contribute to establishing greater participation of boys and men in conflict prevention work and measures to increase gender equality, and in counteracting gender-based violence – including conflict-related sexual violence” (Swedish NAP 2016, 12). Further, Sweden will also work for international humanitarian law and international criminal law to be interpreted and applied from a gender perspective, considering in particular the survivors’ right to truth, reparations, access to justice, adequate healthcare, trauma counselling and services, the physical integrity of women and girls and the opportunities for sexual and reproductive health and rights before, during and after conflicts. Further, in conflict and post-conflict countries, Sweden needs to support women’s human rights defenders and women leaders who are at a great risk of violence and threats because of their function in the community (Swedish NAP 2016, 13). According to the NAP, it is consequently necessary “active leadership with accountability”, but also that the different government agencies that work within the framework of the Total Defence concept adopt a gender perspective and implement the WPS Agenda (Swedish NAP 2016, 14). Considering the requirement to obtain more even gender distribution and overall increase the proportion of women deployed by Sweden to contribute to peace keeping, peace building and civil crisis management initiatives, the NAP also asserts that it is paramount to “support and conduct evidence-based studies and research into the field of Women, Peace and Security” (Swedish NAP 2016, 15). Being also aware that “[w]omen’s participation in peace and security still encounters opposition, both nationally and internationally. Sweden therefore acknowledges the importance of persistent, strategic, clear and context-specific leadership to further the issues, at strategic level and in daily operations”, in this sense since 2015 it has adopted an ambassador for gender equality who also coordinates the feminist foreign policy (Swedish NAP 2016, 17)²¹⁷.

²¹⁶ In their study on national actions plans analysed at the beginning of this chapter, Myrntinen, Shepherd and Wright (2020, 20) acknowledge that even if many states make reference to the role of women in building sustainable peace, few specify how they will actually support women in order to give them the possibility to participate meaningfully in peace processes and longer-term peacebuilding activities, but they report as one good favourable example exactly this part of the Swedish NAP.

²¹⁷ See the Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018, pp. 16–19 (<https://www.government.se/495f60/contentassets/66afd4cf15ee472ba40e3d43393c843a/handlingsplan-feministisk-utrikespolitik-2018-enge.pdf>) but also the new plan adopted in 2019

Accordingly,

Sweden will endeavour to maintain its leading position in the world regarding gender perspectives on military operations/ activities and will continue to offer training and concepts through the Swedish Armed Forces in cooperation with regional and international organisations. Together with its Nordic colleagues, Sweden will work towards strengthening Nordic cooperation within this field, with more extensive exchange of information and experience and joint action. This will partly take place within the framework of the Nordic Women Mediators' Network. Sweden will also work towards ensuring that robust joint Nordic action continues within the framework of the 1325 activities within the UN (Swedish NAP 2016, 18).

The NAP also underlines the role played by Sweden in ensuring the post of the EU's principal advisor on gender equality and /Women, Peace and Security, while it recognizes that the EU's plan for gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations (2016–2020) highlights the EU's strong ongoing commitment to the WPS Agenda. In addition, Sweden will also take part in the EU's Task Force for 1325. Within the framework of the Council of Europe, Sweden will in particular focus on the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence which applies in both peacetime and during armed conflict (Swedish NAP 2016, 19). As a matter of fact, “[g]ender-based and conflict related sexual violence are unacceptable, and the UN and its Member States must never be perceived to lack the ability to take action or adequate mechanisms with which to hold those responsible accountable, irrespective of who the perpetrator is” (Swedish NAP 2016, 20). Further, Sweden will take into account the CEDAW Convention, and especially recommendation n.30, in its work on the WPS Agenda, which is also based on a strong collaboration with the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, based in Sweden, and which has been appointed as Department Head for gender within NATO. Within the OSCE organization, the policy makes explicit reference to the role played by OSCE's field offices, the Gender Section at the Secretariat in Vienna and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (Swedish NAP 2016, 20). On the other hand, the policy recognizes that “[s]ustainable results require national ownership and broad commitment by various actors as well as context-specific objectives” (Swedish NAP 2016, 22). In its third NAP, Sweden declares also to put its focus on some specific countries, in Africa: The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali and Somalia; in Asia:

<https://www.government.se/499195/contentassets/2b694599415943ebb466af0f838da1fc/the-swedish-foreign-service-action-plan-for-feminist-foreign-policy-20192022-including-direction-and-measures-for-2020.pdf>.

Afghanistan and Myanmar; in Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ukraine; in Latin America: Colombia; in the Middle East: Iraq, Palestine and Syria. In addition, it looks at the WPS Agenda within the framework of the Cyprus peace process (Swedish NAP 2016, 23). “Sweden has a long tradition of generous and ambitious development cooperation, still Swedish development cooperation must be clear in its values and courageous in its actions” and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has been commissioned

to ensure an integrated conflict perspective and gender equality perspective in all development cooperation to support women as actors for peace: women as mediators, women as actors in peace processes and peacebuilding, and women’s human rights defenders in conflict-stricken countries (Swedish NAP 2016, 24).

Indeed, “Sweden has a feminist government and applies feminist foreign policy” which considers the WPS Agenda as a priority for Sweden according to the principles of transparency, broad participation and cooperation (Swedish NAP 2016, 25). Thus, the plan states that its follow-up will comprehend meetings twice a year by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, an annual report on Sweden’s implementation of the NAP and a midterm review, further in 2020 an external evaluation will take place in preparation for the next NAP (Swedish NAP 2016, 26).

On the other hand, Sweden's 2016 NAP, like the previous ones, does not assign a budget²¹⁸.

7.3.2 Voices from the inside

As expressed in Sweden’s Policy Brief on the 20-year anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security:

Women’s participation in peace processes is needed to create a sustainable and legitimate peace. This is important both as a right to representation as well as to the improved quality of peace processes. Inclusive peace negotiations ensure a broader commitment to the deals made and the inclusion of a wider array of experiences of conflict. [...] Further efforts need to be undertaken as to strengthen the infrastructure for inclusive peace and security, including addressing the link between economic empowerment and women’s participation in the realm of peace and security.

²¹⁸ While Sweden does not have a recent history of conflict, it plays an important role in international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations around the world (<https://www.peacewomen.org/nap-sweden>).

As foreign minister Ann Linde stressed during the symposium hosted for the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 and as the UN Secretary General has acknowledged,

women's leadership and contributions should be at the heart of resilience and recovery efforts of Covid-19. Sweden reaffirms the need to promote the WPS-agenda at all levels and works intensively to act on its commitments in this regard. It will continue to tirelessly support women's participation in peace processes in multiple contexts, as well as within the fora of international cooperation (Sweden WPS brief 2020, 3).

Accordingly, Sweden continues “to champion” the WPS Agenda and works intensively to promote it at all the different levels, in this sense, and considering the need to build back better also in light of the Covid 19 pandemic, “[t]he over-arching priorities of the government within the realm of WPS are leadership, supporting implementation and ensuring accountability”, which are described in these terms:

2.1.1 Leadership

In order to achieve full integration and keep momentum, bold and strong leadership is key. We have to fight for women's rights and participation.

- *Ensure 2020 is a year of moving forward.*
- *Essential to counter attacks on women's full and equal enjoyment of human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights.*
- *Ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights and strengthen services for survivors.*
- *Ensure WPS is part of strategic documents, operational planning and leadership compacts.*
- *Systematically influence decision making at all levels of peace initiatives.*
- *Resource the agenda. All international organizations with a peace and security mandate should apply gender budgeting.*

2.1.2 Implementation

Practical measures must be taken by national governments, multilateral institutions as well as by individual missions. We need to be as concrete as possible (Sweden WPS brief 2020, 4).

2.1.3 Accountability

Ensure clearly defined responsibilities to fully implement, communicate and follow up WPS is essential. We need to make sure that whatever is decided becomes reality through actionable recommendations.

- *Strategies developed for women's participation in peace processes and decision-making bodies.*
- *Ensure reports on peace keeping has sex-disaggregated data and a gender perspective.*
- *Consult regularly with civil society – at local, national and international level.*
- *Make prevention and prosecution of conflict related sexual violence central in peace efforts (Sweden WPS brief 2020, 5).*

Further, in 2021 Linde announced that

Sweden takes its responsibility for international peace, security and sustainable development. Sweden is working for inclusive peace processes in which different parts of the population can be heard. Women's participation in the prevention of conflict and building peace is a prerequisite for creating sustainable societies. Sweden is actively pursuing issues related to women's participation and to combating conflict-related sexual violence. We emphasise the importance of leadership, implementation and accountability (Linde 2021, 2).

Linde (2021, 5) remarks that Sweden is often the only bilateral donor to bring up the issue of gender equality, but she is also aware that the implementation of Sweden's action plan for the WPS Agenda has met several challenges, in particular for what regards: structural challenges and gender-unequal norms and power structures; shrinking space for civil society and external partners; challenges linked to cooperation; resources and possibilities for implementation; internal processes, institutionalisation and development of gender equality work; practical conditions internally and externally regarding implementation. On the other hand, these challenges can “result in interesting lessons learned about

how this work can be strengthened to achieve greater impact and better implementation” (Linde 2021, 9).

In January 2022, at the 2022 Folk och Försvar (Society and Defence) Annual National Conference, Linde declared that

Globally, Sweden stands up for human rights and civil society. The EU is our most important foreign and security policy platform. In twelve months’ time, Sweden’s will take over the Presidency of the EU, and we will be well prepared. Sweden’s feminist foreign policy has gained considerable traction internationally. I am proud of that, not least because the women, peace and security agenda is important. It should go without saying that women must be included in all parts of a conflict cycle. But, unfortunately, there is still a huge need to affirm women’s and girls’ rights to security and to live free from violence, both in conflicts and in general (Linde 2022).

An officer²¹⁹ in the Swedish Armed Forces, who works also at the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM), explained that the Centre was established in 2012 in the context of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) nations (that is Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) as an International Military Organization. In 2013 the centre became also Department Head for the Gender Discipline within NATO and it has now personnel from the Netherlands and Canada as well. Considering that it was explicitly created to implement the WPS Agenda, this centre can be considered as a direct result of this agenda. Looking at the interviewee’s personal experience in Afghanistan, which brought to a negative perception of FETs, the interviewee pointed out how mixed teams do also have an important symbolic value in showing that in the armed forces “we do not treat men and women differently, unless it is necessary”. In relation to the SAF it is also primary to consider the historical background because for more than 200 years Sweden did not almost use its armed forces and, consequently, a lot of people do not really know what the armed forces do, there is no real connection between the armed forces and the outer society. In fact, history matters. In the interviewee’s opinion there is a lack of interest on the part of the female students because they do not even know why they should join the army; thus, it is important to have informative events. The informant also explained that now there is an increasing focus on home defence and total defence and that while Sweden is not part of NATO there is a positive view towards it. Further, the NCGM has both an internal and an external focus. The former, though, is not so much developed also because

²¹⁹ During an interview held on the 13 of May 2020.

the armed forces are very different within their own branches, still, looking for instance at the soldiers' equipment, body armours are always based on male body standards, an issue which becomes a physical limitation for every military woman regardless of the specific branch of the armed forces she is part of. The officer also found the Italian leadership, considering especially the students participating in the courses at the NCGM, as being characterized by an honest interest in understanding the themes being discussed. Indeed, they were open about admitting that these concepts were not well-known before the courses (still the interviewee pointed out that the situation was not so different in the Nordic countries). While all the nations are quite far-behind in this area, it is also interesting to notice how it was nations not characterised by very strong feminist policies which pushed for the launch of the WPS Agenda (such as Namibia). This agenda had also a strong role in finally bringing up conflict related sexual violence not only as a side effect of conflict but as a stand-alone issue. Still, even if we need "strong boots on the ground", and thus we need the necessary tools, the SAF, at the time of the interview, had only five full time gender advisors, which was absolutely not enough, but overall, according to the officer, no armed forces had put enough budget yet on this work. Accordingly, the officer reported that it is also very frustrating to observe that gender advisors can be asked to be advisors on many different topics besides their specific area of expertise.

Further, the role of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), which is the Swedish agency for peace, security and development, named after Count Folke Bernadotte, UN's first peace mediator, was outlined in the framework of another interview²²⁰. In fact, as part of Sweden's international development aid, this agency promotes peace in conflict-affected countries, offers training and advice and conducts research in order to strengthen peacebuilding and state building. It also grants funds to civil society organizations working with peace and security and it deploys civilian personnel to peace operations and election observation missions, primarily led by the UN, EU and OSCE. Considering their work for dialogue and peace mediation, the interviewee noted that conflict in itself is not necessarily negative, but rather an expression of differences of interest. It needs to be addressed in a constructive way avoiding violence. Further, mentioning both the women, peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda, the informant underlined that, in a context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the signing of a peace agreement in a country affected by violent conflict marks what is actually the beginning of a sensitive transitional period from war to peace. Seen that security sector reform is intended to create stability and prevent conflicts from re-emerging, the agency addresses topics such as rule of law, human rights and election support. Further, the interviewee explains that FBA is a government agency under the authority of the Swedish

²²⁰ During an interview held on the 29 of July 2020.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs working in close cooperation with SIDA, the Swedish International Development Company, on conflict prevention, conflict solution in relation to conflict-affected countries. This agency was established in 2002 and initially it was made up of only 4 employees, while now they are more than 150, with 80 experts on secondment to peace operations around the world. In addition, FBA seconds civilian personnel to the international peace operations which Sweden contributes to. FBA only deploys personnel of Swedish nationality to peace operations led by the EU, UN and OSCE and to the headquarters of these organizations where peace operations are being planned and managed. Looking at the importance of the role of international civilian crisis management in order to reach sustainable peace, they also provide yearly funds to Swedish civil society organizations working with peace and security. The interviewee pinpointed that in their work of policy development and capacity building projects, they receive tasks directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focusing on conflict and post-conflict situations. The two main agencies engaged in this work are in fact SIDA (specialized in long-term action) and FBA, while they have different tasks they also work together, in fact WPS is a strong focus for both of them. For what regards peace operations, FBA has a mandate to deploy civilians with civilian capacities, in fact, even if some have a military background, the agency works with civilians. Although they can recruit military officers, they are not chosen because of their military capacities but because of their specific skills and they need permission from the military. Still, FBA works in close collaboration with the military, for instance they arrange together with the SAF the Viking exercises which are very important civil led military exercises organized periodically. They are one of the world's largest international staff exercises, jointly planned and carried out by staff from the UN, EU, civilian authorities, police, military and representatives from humanitarian organizations and are directed at training participants for peace and crisis management operations²²¹. Furthermore, FBA organizes tailor-made courses for specific partners. For what concerns their relationship with the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, it is necessary to observe that the latter is focused on military gender advisors while FBA is focused on civilian gender advisors. They cooperate mainly on leadership and gender, but the military does its own training in its own centre, the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre (SWEDINT), where the NCGM is located. FBA has, through the years, contributed to SWEDINT training. The informant, besides, remarks that it is important to take into account that each state is organized in a different way. In Sweden many actors collaborate in peace operations in the form of a network, which is composed mostly of military staff and police personnel but also of personnel from agencies such as the Swedish Rescue Service Agency, which deals with disaster and humanitarian

²²¹ See: <https://fba.se/en/areas-of-expertise/leadership-cooperation/viking-18--for-cooperation-in-international-peace-operations/>

efforts. It is also necessary to be aware that the challenges faced at home are mirrored in peace operations. In this sense, considering also that many EU countries do not provide training before missions (it is a matter of resources and political commitment), the interviewee remarked that there is a civilian compact at the EU level to provide specific training before deployment. For what regards the WPS Agenda, it was underlined that when Sweden's feminist foreign policy was declared in 2014 FBA received a lot of funding in relation to it and, indeed, now they have 15/16 full time staff working on that. The agenda is very broad, they work with those aspects more related to their functions: women's rights, participation, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, but they are still building their capacities. There is a lot of work to be done within the agenda, there is for sure a need for it, but gender is a perspective which needs a proper analysis, in fact, according to the interviewee a lot of the agenda fails because there is exactly a lack of analysis. There is still a lot of lip-service and not enough leadership commitment, thus gender has to compete with other topics considered more important, whereas it should not be put on the side but incorporated into all the various activities. In this sense, a lot of the organizations which are working with FBA said that what is really needed is not to have more resolutions but to concretely implement the resolutions that we already have. For instance, considering the Stockholm's talks, where important peace negotiations about Yemen were held, the interviewee reminds that although the partners involved did not want to have the presence of women, Sweden brought them there to participate in the mediation processes²²². Referring to the contribution that women make to peace operations, especially in terms of increasing their quality, a question which was explicitly raised was: when are we going to talk about the contribution that men bring? This is a very valid point according to the interviewee, in fact "you put more responsibility on women just because they are women". The interviewee also pointed out that it is not sufficient to talk about human rights, but it is necessary to talk specifically about women, it is fundamental to observe whose rights we are talking about. Women should not be given higher responsibility in peace operations, neither they should be charged with more responsibility just because they are women. At the UN there is a parity programme in order to increase women's leadership, still the number of women does not mean gender perspective (on the other hand, the interviewee is even more critical of the work done by the EU, especially in its external action service and missions). Seen this overall focus on parity, the informant remarks that there are a lot of men who think that they lost their job because of women, that the system is unfair. Finally, looking directly at Sweden the interviewee believes that the low number of women in the SAF is the result of old policies within the military

²²² The Stockholm agreement was agreed in Stockholm, Sweden, on 13 December 2018, see: <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/year-after-stockholm-agreement-where-are-we-now> (accessed 18/08/2022). Talks on Yemen were held in Stockholm again on 17-19 June 2022, see: <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2022/06/sweden-meeting-place-for-talks-on-yemen/> (accessed 18/08/2022).

structure and that it is necessary to observe the developments connected to the new conscription system. On the other hand, remarking the overall strong commitment of the SAF to the WPS Agenda, the informant observed that while international operations were mostly the focus of Sweden in the nineties, as part of the idea that Sweden's security starts abroad, at the present time there is more focus on national protection, according to the idea of "protecting Sweden in Sweden".

A Senior Gender Advisor to the Swedish Armed Forces²²³ explained that they work at the strategic-military level to support the SAF in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and in the integrate of a gender perspective in military operations. Moreover, the interviewee is a Gender Equality and Diversity Strategist in the Strategic Personnel Division of the SAF and is a civilian. In fact, the interviewee explained that there are a lot of civilians in the military working in different positions, sometimes they are purely administrative staff. According to the interviewee, it is very difficult to have follow up from international missions. For instance, Sweden participates in the international mission in Mali as part of MINUSMA, consequently the reports go directly to New York and not back to Sweden, in fact, they are considered part of the UN system. For what concerns the situation of women in the SAF, the interviewee retains that it is strongly influenced by the requirement of being a role model, which comes also from the national and cultural context of Sweden. In fact, this Senior Gender Advisor comments that "they take for granted that people who enter in there are raised in a gender sensitive society". Even if there is still a very low number of women in the SAF, the interviewee underlines that they are champions in this area because they are actually raising the questions. Considering how crucial is the participation pillar of the WPS Agenda, the informant highlighted that it is fundamental to create a female network. In the SAF, furthermore, the idea of increasing the number of women is understood in the Swedish context as the idea of having a more balanced environment, as a work of social engineering. The interviewee does not know, though, how much the WPS Agenda influenced internally the SAF, the focus of their work is more externally oriented. Within the military institution they have been working a lot on anti-discrimination policies. Still, for any kind of work to be done it is necessary to have specific goals, very tangible indicators of change. Additionally, to have more women is important not only in terms of equal opportunities and rights but also in terms of reaching out to the whole labour market, and not to make use only of the 50% of its competences. Consequently, the SAF needs to be an attractive employer. Taking into account the small number of women in the armed forces, especially at the leadership level, the interviewee considers that it is an historical remnant of the male only conscription system, in fact only in 2010 a universal conscription system, which remained dormant until 2017, was adopted. Thus,

²²³ During an interview held on the 14 of September 2020.

according to the interviewee, this lack of women is a historical legacy of a strongly male dominated organization (even if women were already allowed to enter into the armed forces in the 1980s). Looking at the role of the SAF, the interviewee acknowledged that it is a matter of political decisions: since 2015 the focus has moved to the national and regional area, further, the majority of the population is not in favour of joining the NATO but of remaining neutral and, in this sense, the main actor for cooperation is the EU. Finally, the informant pinpoints that they also work with other governmental agencies and especially civil contingency agencies dealing with the protection of civilians in a context of total defence. On the other hand, to do humanitarian work is not the role of the military, even if they can create the prerequisites, with the right training they can create the conditions for it. Still, sometimes it is even too risky for people to leave the military compound and consequently it is very difficult to engage with the local population.

7.3.3 Voices from the outside

A professor in the context of the Swedish Defence University²²⁴ called attention to the fact that the Swedish Armed Forces depict themselves as forces for good, as a cosmopolitan-minded and post-national military, engaged in peacekeeping practices as the core of the new post-national defence. Further, the professor explained that the SAF represents itself as a gender aware and gender equal military which in 2016 adopted a Handbook on Gender. Sweden is also the second country in the world, after Norway, to have a gender-neutral conscription system²²⁵. In fact, in 2010 a gender-neutral form of conscription was adopted in Sweden together with a bill to deactivate conscription in times of peace and replace the conscription system with a volunteer-based (gender neutral) recruitment system. The conscription was reactivated in 2017 (on the basis of perceived threats to national security and the inability to recruit enough service members on a voluntary basis), thence the reactivated gender-neutral conscription system was implemented already in 2018. This can be considered as a liberal feminist success story. This professor also underlined that the gender perspective was included as an operational effectiveness issue, not in terms of women's issues, a way which was probably more effective in relation to the armed forces. As an explanation, though, for the very limited numbers of women in the SAF the interviewee made reference to the long history of male conscription system of these armed forces, but also to the general lack of interest of women in applying to the armed forces. According to the interviewee, this is probably due to a limited

²²⁴ During an interview held on the 28 of April 2020.

²²⁵ Contrary to common beliefs, Israel does not conscript women and men on equal terms.

understanding of what a military career entails. Still, with this new form of conscription system the number of women has increased, although there is nonetheless a retention problem. The interviewee also brought attention to the fact that even if the role of the armed forces has changed, moving away from traditional warfare to more complex jobs, still many countries, like Sweden, are going back to more traditional understandings of warfare and the military. Again, according to the professor, the military is a masculine culture which is not inclusive, the armed forces have changed a lot in the last twenty years but not enough and the female presence is not the norm in the organization. Though, according to this professor, the military needs to compete with all the other professions, in fact while in the USA the only way for poor black people to get out of their situation is to join the military, this is not the case in Sweden where people join the armed forces only if they are very interested in what this institution comprehends. In terms of integration, the interviewee remarked that mixed teams are better than female only teams which create segregation, still the Norwegian armed forces have done very interesting tests with female only teams which performed better than mixed ones. In fact, these female soldiers did not feel inferior but more welcomed, on the other hand when, after the initial training, they were integrated into the other units the number of women dropped again. In addition, the interviewee pinpointed that the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, even if it is a fundamental reality, has also brought to a form of institutionalization of the WPS Agenda and to the risk of collecting all the people working in this area only within that organization. Instead, one of the main goals of this organization would be that of spreading this knowledge, for instance training the trainers. Finally, the interviewee also argued that in the Swedish armed forces it is time to talk about masculinity. While the implementation of the WPS Agenda started rather as an externally focused work it has evolved in the last few years becoming much more internally oriented, still considering that there appear to be so little cases of sexual harassment he asks if maybe they are underreported or some reports get lost, in fact people will not report if there is not a receptive culture.

Within the very context of the Swedish Defence University, another Professor²²⁶ explained that the military culture strongly influences the participation of women in the armed forces. In fact, while Sweden started integrating women already in the eighties their number has remained very low, there is very little retention and very few officers. Still, while in the Italian armed forces the hierarchical structure is very rigid and vertical, characterizing it as a total institution, in Sweden the command structures are much more fluid. The Italian culture is very concerned by the image that it gives to the outside, in fact it is important to look at the history, at the second world war and at the subsequent civil war which created a gap between the armed forces and the society and consequently a strong

²²⁶ During an interview held on the 7 of May 2020.

distrust towards the armed forces. The Swedish armed forces, on the other hand, have been strongly shaped by the Cold War and by the close threat created by Russia and consequently there has always been a policy of total defence and non-alignment. In the nineties the peacekeeping activity became predominant and it reached its peak with the Swedish involvement in Afghanistan. Since 2014, though the situation went back to a form of total defence because of the newly aggressive moves of Russia, which has also brought to the reintroduction of the conscription. It is, on the other hand, more difficult to understand in which direction Italy is going. Indeed, there is a strong involvement in the UN but also the threat of the migratory crisis, which requires an intense use of the navy, so more than peacekeeping work, the Italian armed forces are doing military assistance. The interviewee is aware that there is a very specific Italian form of patriarchy (in Italy there is a strong paternalism which tend to put women in ancillary roles generating a lot of frustration) and a very limited amount of women in the Italian armed forces, on the other hand, the interviewee recognizes that, notwithstanding the very different gender norms, the Swedish armed forces have very little numbers as well. The Italian armed forces are yet a very close institution which is not at ease with opening to the outside world and this makes it also quite difficult to study them. On the other hand, Sweden shows a very peculiar and rigid understanding of feminism, it is a form of State feminism, reflected as well in a peculiar understanding of gender equality. A lot of dynamics, then, in Sweden are informal and there is a lot of submerged machismo. Even if it is still common everywhere, it is particularly difficult to talk about it in a country which is considered to be one of the most progressive in this area. Further, for what concerns the interest of women in joining the armed forces, it is fundamental to look at how women are socialized, which is an obstacle even in Sweden. Considering also the values which matter the most in the Swedish society, the Swedish armed forces are characterized by a strong internal inclusion, well outlined by the usual participation of the chief of the armed forces in the pride parade organized every year in Stockholm. On the other hand, the professor highlights that on the external side they remain a military organization, whose role is the legitimate use of force on the territory. Overall, though, according to the interviewee, the integration of women in the armed forces is very connected to the specific context, for instance while France is characterized by a more egalitarian society, characterized by a quite explicit equality discourse, the armed forces are distinguished by a strong focus on the idea of assertiveness, where combat is considered to be the core of the organization. Thus, the situation of women within the institution is quite difficult and there have been important issues of sexual harassment.

Another Swedish Professor²²⁷ highlighted that women have been conceptualized within the Swedish Armed Forces at the same time as a problem and a solution which is quite problematic. Thus, the approach can be a bit opportunistic, if you need women, you find a way to legitimize their inclusion. Yet, gender equality is very important at the strategic level because it has to do with democratic values. On the other hand, the SAF has also done a lot of rhetorical work, it became a mantra: “we need women because we become more efficient”, but there is not a lot of evidence in this sense, it is a difficult and challenging route to take. Indeed, the documents and the resolutions which make up the WPS Agenda make a lot of sense, but it is also necessary to look at how they are interpreted and implemented, it can easily be watered down.

In the context of the Swedish civil society, an interview was conducted with an organization working for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, in Sweden and in partnership with women’s and peace organizations around the world²²⁸, engaging in particular young women in order for them to become peace influencers, taking up public leadership. Remarking how, in their work, they make use of the Universal Periodic Review as a tool to address Sweden on these issues, the interviewee pointed out that the Swedish Armed Forces showed a strong interest in the topic since the very start of the WPS Agenda. The interviewee also underlined that the WPS Agenda is made up of a national component which is fundamental for peace building, for instance honour-based violence can be considered as a relatively new phenomenon which is, though, affecting a great number of people. It develops in a context of segregation between immigrants and ethnic Swedes which increases insecurity in the society and brings to a lack of cohesion, whereas peace has to be constructed as cohesion.

Overall, Kvinna till Kvinna, Operation 1325 and WILPF Sweden are the main organisations advocating for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Sweden (EPLO 2013, 64).

As the 2011 Report of Operation 1325 “Security Council Resolution 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report” remarks,

Sweden has no recent history of internal conflict – it is often proudly said that Sweden has not had war for 200 years. Sweden has for a long period had a policy of neutrality and nonalignment. This position of neutrality has however changed gradually during the last years – Sweden has become more active in the European security cooperation and moved closer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), without being a member. This changed position is clear in

²²⁷ During an interview held on the 15 of December 2020.

²²⁸ During an interview held on the 20 of January 2020.

this year's Statement of Government Policy, which states that Sweden, as a member of the European Union, is part of a political alliance and that it takes its share of responsibility for Europe's security. It is further stated "Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected." (Stenberg 2011, 349).

Moreover, the Swedish Government's security policy is based on a broad definition of security, especially considering that

contemporary threats to our security are changeable, complex and boundless. [...] One example of this is globalisation, which is described as a generally positive development, but it is also recognised that it could lead to an increased vulnerability to security threats such as terrorism, dispersion of weapons of mass destruction, organised criminality, pandemics, environmental disasters, and financial crises (Stenberg 2011, 350).

The report highlights that a major obstacle faced by deployed women is that of discrimination and sexual harassment, indeed, according to a study conducted in 2005, about one third of the female officers in international missions have been subject to sexual harassments (a similar percentage has been reported in national duty) (Stenberg 2011, 350). Further, as observed so far, the share of women in the armed forces is very low and most of the civilian women are located in the headquarters, working in the administration. While women have had access to the Swedish armed forces since the beginning of the 20th century, for a long time they could only access to the civilian positions, further "the military is viewed as something primarily for men", characterized by "a still prevalent masculine culture that does not welcome women" (Stenberg 2011, 355). According also to a study by Ivarsson, Estrada and Berggren (2005, as reported in Stenberg 2011, 358), "men's attitudes toward women are positive, but not very positive", in fact male officers' attitudes toward women in the military resulted to be not particularly liberal or egalitarian, which is a characteristic often associated with Swedish society, further another study showed that more than half (54 percent) of men within the armed forces were not in favour of female combatants in consideration of the fact that they would start to protect the women instead of fighting (Stenberg

2011, 358-359). Thus, the report concludes that:

[a]lthough women have been significant symbols of peace through history, they are rarely accepted as peace builders with agency and power. A traditional

example of women in media is a crying mother, a grieving widow or a victim of sexual violence and patriarchal oppression - seldom as an empowered actor. When she is admitted to be an active actor in peace processes, it is primarily connected to actions in the civil society related to issues of family, health or protection or in a group of other women demonstrating on the street far away from the corridors of power. Media has great potential to be a forum for changing the public and political opinions. However [...], Swedish media still has a long way to go to be that powerful and important component to challenge stereotypes and improve the struggle of gender balance (Stenberg 2011, 369).

Another issue is who are the women concretely represented and participating in peace processes, as a matter of fact

women are paid special attention to as a coherent group, denying the diversities within women. This could risk reproducing other groups' marginalization if not all women's experiences are included. When advancing women's rights, it is important to promote all women's rights – an intersectional approach should be used and attention should be given to how women's realities are affected by other forms of discrimination such as sexuality and/or ethnicity (Stenberg 2011, 370-371).

Another important issue is the fact that women experts on peace and security are underrepresented in the media, indeed eighty percent of the experts covered by Swedish media are men and this lack of media coverage is a threat to the actual representation of women as experts in the field of peace and security (GNWP 2014, 60).

Looking in particular at the NAPs, in 2013, EPLO²²⁹ asserted

To conclude we would argue that the main obstacle to the implementation of the NAP is the NAP itself. There is a lack of political will, expressed for example in the fact that there is no allocated budget for 1325 implementation, and government ministries and agencies remain reluctant to establish adequate mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and discussing the NAP in cooperation with civil society (EPLO 2013, 67).

²²⁹ The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the independent civil society platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks that are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict (<https://eplo.org/>).

Considering, though, the current Swedish NAP, a 2016 report by Operation 1325, highlighted how it is problematic to see that, as it was the case also in the previous NAP, it lacks an internal component, addressing for instance the Sápmi's First nation people living in the Nordic countries' northern regions. The policy also does not make reference to Sweden's refugee and asylum-seeking population emigrating from conflict or post-conflict countries; indeed, it focuses mainly on foreign affairs and traditional security policy. Still, it includes boys and men, which is a positive development from the previous NAP (Schabbauer 2016, 1). On the other hand, it is fundamental that the Government strives to reach both a quantitative and qualitative increase in the participation of women in peacekeeping operations (Schabbauer 2016, 2). Further, even if the involvement of civil society has been not uniform in the NAPs adopted so far by Sweden, thanks to recommendations by civil society, Sweden nominated, on the 1st of January 2015, an Ambassador for UNSCR 1325 in order to increase its visibility on UNSCR 1325 and to facilitate the government's engagement, likewise "the fact that the current government adopted a Feminist Foreign Policy and has a female foreign minister represents a window of opportunity", while "Sweden is proud to have led the work which resulted in the appointment of the first EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and UNSCR 1325" (Schabbauer 2016, 3). Further, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), a civil society organization, annually monitors the NAP through its project Women Count (Schabbauer 2016, 4).

In the context of the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM)²³⁰, it was explained that the NCGM is a platform for knowledge and expertise regarding gender perspectives in military operations, which is collocated within the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre (SWEDINT). Its aim is to enhance the knowledge on how to implement UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions into military operations in order to increase the operational effects at all levels. In particular it was developed under the umbrella of the Nordic Defence Collaboration (NORDEFECO). As observed, in February 2013 the NCGM was appointed NATO Department Head concerning gender; further this centre cooperates with the UN and other relevant stakeholders within the field. The informant pinpointed that Italy has a strong participation in their courses and that it has used the NCGM as a capacity building tool. Considering the name of the centre, it is important to bear in mind that they take the military perspectives and needs as a priority. They also have a joint agreement collaboration with NATO and the EU. The informant acknowledges that there are a lot of assumptions about what gender and gender in military operations is, there is a lot of resistance. In fact, a lot of people understand the agenda in terms of equality and a women's rights' perspective and not that much in terms of a functional perspective; accordingly, the courses at the centre try to change this perspective:

²³⁰ During an interview held on the 29 of May 2020.

“it is not just because it is the right thing to do, but also the effective way to reach your mandate”. At the centre, they stress the operational effect, especially at the higher-level seminars. The objective is to have the leaders understand how to use gender and which is the effect of it. The interviewee has a very optimistic view; in fact, the interviewee believes that this is not something that you change very fast but that it is a continuous job. The WPS Agenda is twenty years old and there is still a lot to do but it is more and more institutionalized and implemented in policies and regulations. The interviewee also recalls a report on “Operational Effectiveness and UN Resolution 1325- Practices and Lessons from Afghanistan”²³¹ released in 2009 which had a very strong impact for NATO, in particular in implementing the role of the gender advisors. Considering FETs, which were created during the war in Iraq by general Petraeus, the interviewee asserted to strongly support engagement teams, not female engagement teams in the way they have been designed. The interviewee retains that they cannot be a side organization, they need to reach the whole population in order to understand the context and the culture. As a matter of fact, in Afghanistan they just collected military women without a proper training and put them into these units. On the other hand, in Norway they have the hunter teams, in fact, they saw that all female groups performed differently and better than mixed teams in the selection periods. Consequently, to actually see the potential of female candidates, especially for what regards physical capabilities where the differences were mostly found in the time required to build them up, they were given the necessary time to develop them, and they were put in mixed teams only later. This strategy could thus facilitate the process of getting the diversity needed by the very armed forces. Indeed, the interviewee believes that the numbers count. The number of men is higher than that of women and this impacts the organization, also in the Nordic countries. Further the internal and the external focus are connected in a mutual relationship.

7.3.4 Voices from the field

In a comparative view between Italy and Sweden, it is now important to look at the experience of the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif which was under the responsibility of Sweden (still consisting of approximately 70 percent Swedish and 30 percent Finnish personnel) since 2006, the year that Sweden adopted its first NAP on the WPS Agenda. As observed, the Swedish approach was based

²³¹ In fact, on December 12, 2007, the North Atlantic Council decided to develop common concepts and a Policy Directive on UN Resolution 1325. As part of this process, eight independent experts from four countries conducted this study, identifying best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of Resolution 1325 in NATO’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. Practices and lessons relate both to effectiveness and the process to integrate Resolution 1325 in operations. An analytical framework was developed and applied on five different PRTs; the Dutch PRT in Tarin Kowt, the Italian PRT in Herat, The New Zealand PRT in Bamyán, the Norwegian PRT in Meymaneh and the Swedish PRT in Mazar-e Sharif (Olsson and Tejpar 2009, 4).

on the employment of UNSCR 1325 to strengthen operational effectiveness (Olsson and Tejpar 2009, 98). According to this report, even if the SAF had had female soldiers since 1980, there were still several issues, for instance regarding cloth sizes fitting women as well as access to suitable body armour (Olsson and Tejpar 2009, 102). At the Swedish PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, around ten percent of the personnel were female, with a higher representation within the PRT HQ Staff than at the tactical level, and no women in the Mobile Observation Teams or the Rifle Company, that is the units mostly in contact with the local population. However, it was widely recognized that more women were needed in the PRT, not least in order to reach out more efficiently to Afghan women. Also for what regards the PRT's small CIMIC unit, aimed especially at gathering information, the lack of female personnel was an obstacle in order to understand local women's needs. For what concerns the Swedish case all PRT personnel had a mandatory pre-deployment training on UNSCR 1325 and there was a Gender Field Adviser in the Command Group, moreover a network of Gender Focal Points was set up, still the personnel experienced difficulties in trying to understand how to realize UNSCR 1325 in their daily activities (Olsson and Tejpar 2009, 112-113).

7.4 Conclusions

Concluding this chapter, it is, thus, undeniable that both Italy and Sweden are quite committed to the whole WPS Agenda project, they both implemented the resolutions by means of various policies, connected in turn to a very complex legal structure which spans from the domestic level up to the international level. Moreover, these policies are enforced by concrete activities and projects “on the ground”, usually in close cooperation with the civil society. At the same time, it is necessary to be aware that the Italian army military culture and the Swedish army military culture are different, being the results of quite different historical processes. The former has mostly been built as a reaction to a previous fascist identity and the subsequent need to increase its legitimacy which has led to “a reevaluation of the preexisting idea of Italian soldiers as ‘good people’”, or rather currently as “good humanitarians” (Ruffa 2018, 47-48), the latter on the strong internal and external recognition as a gender aware cosmopolitan military (Egnell 2019). Thus, it is essential to keep always a context-sensitive approach. On the other hand, both these countries' systems of governance of the WPS Agenda lie on quite unstable foundations and give rise to quite clear paradoxes well represented by the low number of women actually participating in these institutions. In fact, as observed not only in the Italian and Swedish contexts but more broadly in the whole multi-level governance of the WPS Agenda, stereotypical descriptions of women persist and are passed down by women, and military

women, themselves. See for instance this description made by Debora Corbi (2014, 136) one of the first women to join the Italian armed forces: “The constant commitment provided in the world of work and the general sense of responsibility that distinguishes women, have contributed to improving some processes and sectors of employment thanks to the particular and natural sensitivity and empathy that only women possess”²³². At the same time Farina (2004, 289) reminds us that

[t]he armed forces are today a social laboratory where new terms of gender and minority relations are experimented; these increasingly emerge from the invisibility originated by the dominance of the male and virile warrior model. It is not possible to try to understand whether the female military service is emancipation or homologation if one does not first try to identify the references and expectations of the subjects that cross the border, what happens inside military organizations when this happens.

Still, the WPS Agenda was born as a clear transformative agenda on the global peace and security scenario, and it should not lose sight of this feminist project.

²³² Translation by the author of this research.

8. Women's leadership and participation in a comparison between Italy and Sweden: where the military is heading and where the women are going to stand?

Armies that revel in their separateness from civil society, that value male over female, that use their imposed values to exclude those who do not fit the particular traits of the dominant group, who celebrate the violence that is integral to my profession rather than seeking ways to contain it – they do nothing to distinguish the soldier from the brute (Lt. Gen David Morrison 2014)²³³.

8.1 Findings:

Looking at all the data collected and examined, it is possible to extract some preliminary findings and, thence, formulate some conclusions.

First of all, the WPS resolutions cover a wide range of topics which constitute parts of the overarching theme of peace and security: from operationalising WPS, developing indicators and measuring outcomes (UNSCR 2106, UNSCR 1889, UNSCR 2122, UNSCR 2242, and UNSCR 2493) to recognising the weaponization of sexual violence in armed conflict, developing strategies to combat it and increasing access to justice for victims of sexual violence (UNSCR 1820, UNSCR 1888, UNSCR 1960, and UNSCR 2467). On the other hand, it is evident the problematic habit of representing women as a monolithic group and conflating “women” with “gender”, whereas a gender perspective should consider the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives and “avoid placing the burden of change on women” (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 5). In this sense, a recent study of Rwandan peacekeepers highlighted how many leaders had the tendency, which brings to the development of taboos and stigmas²³⁴, to take for granted that women “naturally knew how to respond to local women's needs” and “inherently possessed the required skill set, incorporating the traditional feminine traits of empathy, compassion, communication and the ability to care for vulnerable people” (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 7). Further a real gender perspective should not only add “men and boys” to the discourse, as it is increasingly becoming the norm (even if in terms of a mere addition which seems still to lack any real analysis of its actual meaning), but it should even include the manifold

²³³ Speaking at the UN Conference on Women, Peace and Security, London, June 2014, as quoted in Coomaraswamy (2015, 138).

²³⁴ Taboos refer to social or religious factors that create external perceptions of women that may lead to them avoiding deployment to peace operations. Stigmas refer to societal disapproval of women deploying to peace operations. When women do deploy, this may lead to them facing a lack of respect or negative opinions because they have done something society does not approve of (Vermeij 2020, 9).

identities and flexible expressions of the gender spectrum²³⁵. In this sense an interviewee²³⁶ underlined that it would be important quite important to start talking of gender, peace and security, in fact focusing only on women erases gender and consequently men and all the nonbinary categories. Nevertheless, the informant is also aware that there is much more resistance about gender and that it is easier to talk about women, it is necessary to have a practical approach. Yet, according to the informant, a lot of opportunities have been lost in the WPS Agenda because of its over focus on women, even if more recent UN resolutions include also men and boys.

Considering also the strong overlap between the WPS and protection of civilians (POC) agendas, also in terms of the justifications employed to increase the number of women in peace operations, it is important recall once more that the continuous grouping of “women and children” brings to “the reductive view that women do not have agency in their own safety and protection and thus need to be protected”, to their homogenization and to the fusion of these two categories, an act which “simultaneously infantilizes women and negates the complexity of children’s issues”, while completely excluding men (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 11). Moreover, as repeatedly stressed, discussions about increasing the number of women in this “maledominated peacekeeping system” focus almost only on the “added value” of women, so that the burden is always on women to prove their worth (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 12). Thus, as emerged through this research, it is necessary to look for transformative possibilities in UN peacekeeping and the UN’s goals around women’s participation, both quantitative and qualitative, and to root them in concrete data, in fact empirical backing is necessary to fight essentialist descriptions of men and women, such as the standard representation of women in military and police contingents as role models for local women. As Nina Wilén (2020, 1) affirms, it is necessary to “transform gender-biased institutions without reinforcing gender stereotypes”. Indeed, even if many military women consider themselves as “soldier first, woman second,” on mission the soldier or police function is often judged secondary (Baldwin and Taylor 2020, 8). This is reinforced by the fact, as Karim and Beardsley (2017) have observed, that in the military there is a “gendered protection norm” describing men as protectors and women as in need of protection.

These different forms of taboos and stigmas are also strongly influenced by power differences and aggravated by the fact that women are a minority (Vermeij 2020, 5). Vermeij (2020, 6) observed that all the women included in her research asserted that they were considered as a woman first and a

²³⁵ Crenshaw, 1989, p.139).

²³⁵ Considering for instance queer theory which introduced the notions of “gender performativity”, “gender fluidity” and “gender as a spectrum”, all notions that go beyond a static understanding of gender (Radačić and Facio, 2020, 2).

²³⁶ During an interview held on the 18 of November 2020.

soldier second within their national defence forces, thus always feeling questioned about their competence and in need of protection (Vermeij 2020, 6). In this sense, the push to deploy more women to UN peace operations put them in a difficult position (Vermeij 2020, 7) and clearly shows a paradoxical framework where “some military women may be prioritized for deployment because of their sex, others are denied international deployments for the same reason” (Vermeij 2020, 8), a construction which is even worse for mothers who “face a culture of shame” where “are given the contradictory message that if they are mothers, they should stay home, but also that they need to deploy to maintain their career in the military” (Vermeij 2020, 9). The conclusion is, thus, that “[a] woman in the military is either called a slut or a lesbian, no matter what she does. A military woman is never just a soldier, and she will always have a label put on her” (Vermeij 2020, 10-11). Consequently, even if she is continuously seen as a woman, rather than a professional, at the same time, as a female soldier affirmed, “we are not supposed to be girly, but we have to endure the fact that we are girls” (Vermeij 2020, 11). Further, it is also necessary to consider that “being a woman does not make you a gender expert”, indeed, assigning women to “traditionally female” roles can bring to a double stigmatization of confirming stereotypes about the roles which are appropriate for women and of framing specific tasks as “women’s issues” (Vermeij 2020, 15). It is, thence, vital to assign both men and women to gender and protection roles, particularly also in senior leadership. Considering that UN policies and actions mostly look at external aspects of SEA concerning the local population, military women asked for #MeToo movements within national defence forces, but also mentoring programmes and women military networks (Vermeij 2020, 22). Therefore, there is a need to have more military women (so as other minorities) in leadership positions at all the different levels, and also to build up a diverse and inclusive working environment, where not only men are in charge of promoting women (Vermeij 2020, 26). In order to achieve a critical mass, not only financial incentives and affirmative action seem to be legitimate tools, but also the UN itself needs to become a better promoter of the importance of female peacekeepers in all roles, in order to ensure their meaningful participation (Vermeij 2020, 28). Indeed, the term “meaningful participation” was introduced by the Secretary-General exactly considering the dramatic consequences of “token” representation, a superficial participation “without voice and influence” (UN Secretary-General 2018 as mentioned in Krause and Olsson 2018, 2). In fact, “women’s meaningful inclusion is relevant for the quality of the peace” (Krause and Olsson 2020, 2, see also Melander 2018; Olsson 2018), “[w]omen’s inclusion is critical for ensuring progress” (Krause and Olsson 2020, 9) and “essential for increasing legitimacy and social capital, thereby improving the chance for peace durability” (Krause and Olsson 2020, 10). Consequently, it is vital “to move beyond essentialist stereotypes of ‘peace women’ and ‘women’ as a homogenous category” (Krause and Olsson 2020, 5), emphasizing

the core role of diversity and intersectionality (Krause and Olsson 2020, 6). In this sense, during a seminar called “Shattering the glass ceiling: – why and how?” at the UN Headquarters in New York, on the 3 of May 2018, the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Rwanda, Indonesia and Norway displayed the progress made by their countries in the recruitment of more women in their armed and police forces as well as in UN peacekeeping missions. In that occasion, Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani from Indonesia, asserted that there were many reasons to increase women’s participation in peacekeeping and pointed out the fact that “not a single woman peacekeeper has been accused of sexual exploitation and abuse in any peacekeeping mission” (Mpirwa 2018).

8.1.1 The multilevel governance of the WPS Agenda

Looking at what is the actual life of this agenda in the multilevel system of governance where it is located and developed, it is necessary to consider that, as highlighted by the Special Rapporteur in the 2019 annual report of the UN Secretary-General on WPS, there is a widespread increase in misogynistic, sexist, and homophobic language in political discourses, which supports an overall climate of violence against women, LGBTQ+ persons and WHRDs. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the entitlement of many, and even taken for granted, human rights, as well as taken away interest from gender equality programs. As observed, in 2019 China and Russia abstained from voting on UNSCR 2467 (2019) and the USA warned a veto over the resolution, breaking for the first time the practice of unanimity and consensus in the adoption of WPS resolutions (Kaptan 2020, 22-23). Furthermore, more recent events, such as the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and in particular the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, have put the Security Council in a complete deadlock.

As observed, within the UN system, the WPS Agenda is interconnected with other major agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN member states in September 2015 in order to achieve peace and prosperity holistically for all people and the planet²³⁷. Two goals, among the SDGs are particularly interlinked with the WPS Agenda: SDGs 5 and 16 which look at gender equality and peace, justice, and strong institutions. In particular, SDG 5 aims to “[a]chieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, by ending discrimination against women and girls, eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls, and ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of public life. Indeed, as the Agenda 2030 states: “The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities” (Schluchter, Serrano and Bastick 2019, 3). SDG 16 aims to “[p]romote peaceful and

²³⁷ by means of 17 interconnected SDGs, integrated by 169 targets and 232 indicators.

inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”, thus directly connecting development with peace and security. Indeed, the overall goal of the 2030 Agenda is to build “peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights..., on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions” (Schluchter, Serrano and Bastick 2019, 2).

Overall, we have observed that the WPS Agenda is quite holistically embedded in the UN system, still it continues to be characterized by some major flaws in words and numbers. In the very language which is utilized to build and spread this agenda, which is at least inappropriate in upholding a quite resistant description of women as victims and at most pompously empty. It is probably true that, as pinpointed, in order to promote gender equality, it is necessary to recur to rhetoric which can win the hearts and minds of people, but this risks to be a self-destructive strategy when behind the facade there is actual emptiness in the sense that the numbers are not there. Without data, the whole construction is doomed to collapse. The data problem, which has been put under focus many times, was already highlighted in the 2015 Global Study when it was asserted that the lack of data collection not only prevents the evaluation of progress but is also “a useful excuse for lack of action from less-supportive stakeholders” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 329).

The narrative developed within the UN, with its virtues and flaws, is also the narrative which is adopted in turn by the other international organizations; it is adapted to the specific context but the defect of form, wanted or not, there remains.

Indeed, NATO’s approach to the WPS Agenda is framed around the principles of integration, inclusiveness and integrity, but is also fundamental to the realisation of NATO’s common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and NATO’s obligations under the UN Charter (NATO/EAPC 2018, 10). Within NATO, UNSCR 1325 is repeatedly almost obsessively defined as a “landmark resolution”, but also in this case what is eventually recalled is that NATO should improve its methods of data collection, analysis, presentation, and dissemination (Aronsson 2021, 16).

The specific characteristics of each organization emerge also in relation to the image that each organization has created of itself and want to present, accordingly the EU recalls that also in its approach to the WPS Agenda this organization has a very strong rights-based approach, but it also affirms “the EU’s leading role as a gender equality promoter and catalyst” (15086/18 2018, 24). It underlines that “in order to achieve long term peace and development, it is necessary to start from a multidimensional concept of human security” (15671/1/08 REV 1 2008, 4), but it also put very

specific focus on the “human rights of all women and girls” which are “an intrinsic component of peace, security, human rights and sustainable development, also in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its sustainable development goals” (15086/18 2018, 17). At the same time, the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019-2024, considering that “[w]omen and girls, together with men and boys, are all included and actively engaged” (11031/19 2019, 8) takes the clear stance of talking of gender, peace and security.

Also in this case, in its new Strategic Approach to the WPS, the EU asks for “the systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data” (15086/18 2018, 27).

Unlike the EU and NATO, no Regional Action Plan for the integration of the WPS Agenda has been adopted by OSCE, but the work on WPS becomes part of its very concept of comprehensive security, which not only includes the political military aspect and the economical environmental but also the human security part which is its human dimension. Thence, OSCE looks at human security and human rights in the whole context of security, also in connection with the 2030 Sustainable Development goals.

Likewise, also the CoE has a comprehensive concept of security, an approach which was actually conceived even before the concept of human security. In this sense, the issue of violence against women is a security issue in a broader sense, in fact half of the population is not secure. Moreover, its Resolution 1385 (2004), entitled “Conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women”, which addresses UNSCR1325, clearly underlines the necessity of developing “education in peace”.

Considering all these organizations, though, it is necessary not only to consider the internal characteristics of each of them, but also the specific roles of member States in supporting specific policies, for instance we have observed that EU member states with strong domestic gender mainstreaming agendas and policies, such as Sweden, but also Denmark and Finland have championed gender mainstreaming within the EU.

Overall, all these institutions have gradually come to internalize a norm which was born within the UN (and the same works for the UN system as well) in a process which, though, cannot but be an unending work in progress. Whilst this can be considered a success story it comes also with its drawbacks considering that, at least initially, the WPS Agenda was adopted uncritically in a “copy and paste” sort of mechanism, reproducing faithfully and uncritically also its vices. In this sense, already the Global Study on WPS in 2015 recognized that these regional organizations, characterized by a low number of women in peace operations, have increasingly developed “gender-responsiveness”, but still need “to build gender expertise” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 260).

In conclusion, the numbers of women in peace processes are quite inadequate, considering that women constituted only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators and 5% of witnesses and signatories between 1990 and 2017 (Kaptan 2020, 27). More specifically in 2019 the percentages of women in peace operations were still 10.8% in Formed Police Units (FPUs), 28.9% of Individual Police Officers (IPOs), 16.7% of military observers and staff, and 4.7% of troops (Karim et al. 2020, 13), whilst the UN set specific goals for 2028, namely, to reach a portion of 20% women in FPUs, 30% as IPOs, 25% as military observers and staff, and 15% in military contingents (Ghittoni, Lehouck and Watson 2018, 6). Yet, there is an overall increase in the numbers of women in leadership roles in UN missions and in May 2014, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was the first mission with two women in the most senior positions (the Secretary-General's Special Representative, and currently Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, Lisa Buitenhuis, and the commander of the peacekeeping force, Major General Kristin Lund). Still, the dominant problem is the absence of systematic research on the numerical representation of women in peace operations and their meaningful participation, such as the lack of gender disaggregated data on the tasks women are assigned to (Karim et al. 2020, 14). In fact,

[m]eaningful participation refers not only to the numbers or proportions of women deployed, but also to ensuring that women have their needs met when participating in the institution and on missions; that women have access to the same opportunities, roles, and resources as men do; and that women's skillsets and qualifications match their responsibilities and the expectations they face
(Karim et al. 2020, 16),

A crucial enabling factor is, in fact, senior leadership, in particular considering that military, gendarmerie, and police institutions operate through chains of commands, formalized policies are required for gender to be taken into consideration (Karim et al. 2020, 33). Already the Global Study in 2015 under the heading “Ensuring the UN is leading by example: representation and leadership”, declares that success in the implementation of the WPS Agenda depends strongly on the commitment of senior management to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Committed leadership which “enthusiastically supports women’s participation, sends a strong signal about the legitimacy of the issue, reassures women’s organizations and builds the credibility of gender experts working at all levels” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 274). Most importantly, “[t]he world is looking for moral leadership” (Rahmaty and Jaghab 2020, 3). Still, it is necessary, to consider that gender equality policies can have an effective transformative potential only if together with formal rules also informal gender norms

change, indeed, especially in security organisations, characterized by consolidated masculinist norms and practices, gender equality is often institutionalised only formally. As a matter of fact, according to the report of the NGO working group on WPS, not only women's experiences are instrumentalized at the Security Council, especially in order to justify action, but also women's participation in peace and security processes is instrumentalized arguing that women are needed to make peace processes more effective, rather than recognizing their right to equal participation (NGOWG 2020, 4).

As underlined during a previously reported interview²³⁸, the main point is not just to look at the number of women peacekeepers but to look at their actual roles, if these are discriminatory. Only this kind of effort can permit to obtain a complete picture. Considering then that also at the domestic level there are a lot of gaps in terms of uniforms, protective gears etc, in fact women's physique is different, these military women cannot comply to their responsibility to protect (themselves first of all). Further, women who are in the armed forces are often more targeted by sexual harassment and violence inside these very institutions rather than outside, these institutions are not really inclusive. Thinking then about the idea that women bring an added value, the interviewee asks if this is not even a sexist concept, indeed, to ask for the added value of women brings a burden, the necessity to find the added value as a woman, not just as a soldier. Further, since women are so few in the missions, how can they actually bring a change? It is indeed necessary for men to be gender sensitive.

In conclusion, what is needed the most is dependable, pertinent and sex-disaggregated data on WPS. As repeatedly stressed, it is critical to consider that “[d]ata are among the most valuable commodities for social change”, thus it is particularly necessary to have available, accessible and reliable data which “can enhance accountability, trigger public action, inform evidence-based decision-making and enable public policies” that are effective, moreover they need to be properly disaggregated so as to address “those who are lagging behind” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 316).

In this sense a very important practice is the one introduced by NATO which since 2007 started publishing annual country reports on women in the military. These reports are quite detailed because they gather and analyse not only data on national contributions to NATO missions, but also to UN and EU missions, and bring some information about the national systems (Ghittoni, Lehouck and Watson 2018, 10).

²³⁸ held on the 28 of February 2020

8.1.2 The Italian governance of the WPS Agenda

As we have observed, despite the clear provisions of the Constitution, it was only by means of law n. 380/99 that women were finally permitted to enter the Armed Forces and the Guardia di Finanza, starting from the year 2000. The first NAP adopted in 2010 asserts that Italy played a leading role in the negotiations to finally recognize the connection between international security and sexual violence. Recalling that the NAP is a strategic work, which can adapt according to the needs, the policy explains that there are no legislative limits on the deployment of women, the only difference still differentiating men and women can be found in the more favourable minimum physical standards for women. Furthermore, the yearly maximum quotas for the recruitment of women, initially introduced because of logistical issues, were definitively removed in 2006. On the other hand, the low number of women in senior position is connected to their very recent entry into the armed forces.

Moreover, to allow women “to perform the professional duties with peace of mind”, the document asserts that improving the living standards and quality of life of its military and their families is a top priority and that Italy is committed to supporting for families whose members are deployed on international missions (NAP 2010, 7). Also, the entry of women into the armed forces has required the adoption of an ethical code of conduct on respectful behaviour toward others.

The policy also reminds that in relation to WPS the top priorities of Italy are the promotion of women’s rights and the fight against gender-based violence, in particular, the practice of female genital mutilation / cutting (FGM/C).

The NAP recognizes though the necessity for the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, but also for cooperation with the thematic working group on gender policies, set up in 2006, and the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights (CIDU), as national focal point on UNSCR 1325, indeed these actions can bring to “a women’s culture” (NAP 2010, 18). It also reminds that Italy intends to introduce WPS issues as priority during the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council.

The second NAP, adopted in 2014, recalls that Italy is among the first countries to have ratified the Istanbul Convention, and asserts its promotion of the participation of women in the resolution and prevention of conflicts as "agents of change".

Further, in terms of monitoring and evaluation, unlike the previous NAP, this policy asserts that the Government will submit an updated and revised report at the end of the first year, identifying the areas that need to be strengthened, in consultation with both civil society and the Parliament.

Furthermore, the NAP highlights that in July 2011 Italy was among the first States Parties to mention its NAP on UNSCR1325 before the CEDAW Committee in New York. Accordingly, Italy welcomed the recent General Recommendation No. 30 of the CEDAW Committee, focused on the role of "women in the prevention of conflicts and in conflict and post-conflict situations" (NAP 2014, 9). In its previous NAP, Italy was also the first country to recognize the importance of UNSCR1325 in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The II NAP also reminds us that in August 2012, for the first time, NATO's Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative on WPS assisted by an expert on gender issues, who was at the time an Italian national.

Recognizing also that "[t]he role of women is, in some cases, crucial to the achievement of a mission's objectives" (NAP 2014, 15), the policy observes that already in 2002, the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defence issued special Directive ("Military Ethics"), which is an actual code of conduct, then incorporated into a larger document called: "Guidelines on Equal Treatment, Interpersonal Relationships, Family Protection and Parenting" (NAP 2014, 16). In 2012 there was also the establishment of a dedicated organizational unit, at the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defence, called "Equal Opportunities and Gender Perspective." This unit was created in evolution of the existing "Female Military Staff" Section (created in 2000 for the first recruitment of women in the Armed Forces) and it serves to integrate women into the military, in particular through the implementation of a gender perspective and, therefore, of UNSCR 1325 (2000) within the Armed Forces and within the Carabinieri Corps, also through constant cooperation with the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives.

Additionally, ad hoc teams, known as "Female Engagement Teams" (FET), have been formed by two specialized Army Units, namely the Multinational CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) Group, whose Headquarters are in Motta di Livenza, and the 28th Regiment PAVIA, located in Pesaro which are intended to establish a direct relationship with the local population.

Also this NAP puts its focus on preventing and combating harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which represents a serious violation of women's and girls' rights, and one of the main obstacles to gender equality (NAP 2014, 42).

Finally, according also to the 2014 NAP, the limited presence of women in the Armed Forces and in the Carabinieri Corps, especially in the highest ranks, is due to the fact that women's access to this sector was quite recent. Consequently, the policy is of the opinion that this trend will change in the future, considering that encouraging and facilitating the recruitment of women in the Armed Forces has become a national priority.

In 2016 a third NAP was introduced which asserts that the full implementation of the WPS Resolutions is key to fully realizing human rights, peace and security. Recalling that it looks at women as “agents of change”, it stresses that: “[t]he Italian Government attaches the utmost importance to women’s role in transforming society: this is the heart of UNSCR13252” (NAP 2016, 3). Recognizing the importance of transparency, dialogue and a multi-stakeholder approach, it stresses that a national open-ended (inter-ministerial and participatory) Working Group (OEWG) on Women, Peace and Security, led by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights, has been established.

The III NAP starts also talking of reducing the impact of conflict on **women and girls**, while promoting their meaningful and transformational participation.

Finally, the fourth NAP adopted in 2020, recognizing to be a 'living document', with the ability of adapting to the changing needs and obstacles, it explains that the policy will make often reference to “women and children and in particular girls”. In fact, during the 33rd Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, held in Geneva in December 2019, Italy presented an open pledge to other countries to commit to ensure children’s safety and fundamental rights even in situations of armed conflict.

The policy also states that an annual progress report will be published by the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights (CIDU), in dialogue with both civil society and other relevant stakeholders. The Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), led by the CIDU, will have the main responsibility for the implementation of the plan, also in relation to its application and monitoring (NAP 2020, 10).

The NAP also informs us that the indicators contained in the document have been inspired by: the indicators contained in the Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2010/173); those contained in the Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security (Doc.2010 - 11948/10), as updated in September 2016; and the Indicators contained in the EU Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2019 - 2024.

Moreover, it stresses the necessity to look at “human rights and gender equality from an intercultural perspective; gender health determinants from an intercultural perspective; causes and consequences of gender-based violence from an intercultural perspective” (NAP 2020, 17), whilst also strengthening human rights education with the inclusion of WPS-related topics (NAP 2020, 19).

To conclude it asks to:

encourage the meaningful participation of women in the whole process of deployment to peace operations - including through analysis of barriers to their full participation, to monitor internal and external communication initiatives on gender perspective, Res.1325(2000) and on the integration of male and female military personnel in the Armed Forces, but also to conduct statistical studies on this subject [, i]ncrease women's representation and participation in the Armed Forces and Police Forces, including at a senior level, by means of: communication actions aimed at women; interventions for the creation of crèches and nurseries for the children of military personnel; internal communication activities to break down stereotypes (in synergy with the actions, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, already provided for in the National Strategic Plan against male violence against women in accordance with Istanbul Convention) [,] intensify the activities of the Inter-Forces Council on Gender Perspective, an advisory body to the Chief of Defence Staff, on: implementation of Resolutions on WPS; equal opportunities; prohibition of discrimination; integration of male and female military personnel in the Armed Forces; prevention and combating of all forms of violent behaviours (psychological or physical ones) due to the gender of the victim (NAP 2020, 14).

It is, thus, necessary to consider the Guidelines on Equal opportunities, protection of the family and parenthood released in 2017 by the Joint Chief of Staff of the Defence.

According to the Guidelines, even if thanks to the experiences of partner countries, it was possible to immediately include female personnel in compliance with the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities; this admission brought to new situations, such as marriages and cohabitations among the military, which have highlighted issues related to family life and parenting. Another major step was the approval of the law on civilian unions.

Moreover, as we have observed, an organizational unit, called the "Equal opportunities and gender perspective" unit, was established in 2012 within the Personnel Department of the Defence Staff in order to represent the focal point for the implementation of the contents of the WPS Agenda in the military. It also coordinates legislative, organizational, training and communication initiatives on the specific theme and it is in charge of the application within the Armed Forces / Arma dei Carabinieri of NATO Bi - Strategic Command Directive (Bi-SCD) 40 - 1 Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender

Perspectives in the NATO Command Structure including measures for protection during armed conflict. In 2014 an advisory body to the Chief of Defence Staff, called "Joint Council on the Gender Perspective" (composed equally of female and male personnel) was established in order to be in charge of the drafting and monitoring of the effectiveness of directives on the issues of gender perspective, integration of personnel, equal opportunities, the prohibition of discrimination and the well-being of the personnel (Guidelines 2017, p-XII).

Furthermore, the Guidelines highlight that all the military personnel must have the possibility of carrying out the same tasks, regardless of the gender they belong to. As seen above, however, particular exceptions may be envisaged, if for the particularity of the assignment to be performed, sex constitutes an essential and decisive requirement for carrying out the work activity, provided that the objective to be pursued is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate.

The female staff, where possible and without prejudice to the specific peculiarities of each component of the military instrument, must be appointed trying to avoid as much as possible to make them a small minority or, even, only one unit in the assigned body; in addition, in representative activities, it is necessary to avoid the overexposure of one gender (Guidelines 2017, 4).

As an insider in the Italian armed forces, Lieutenant Colonel Rosa Vinciguerra²³⁹, underlined how the fact that Italy has been the last country among the members of NATO to accept women in its ranks is a consequence of the strong stereotypes rooted in the Italian society, especially in connection to what is considered to be the traditional feminine role, but also of the lack of proper measures in terms of policies which could enable to coordinate family and work life.

Quite important in this context is also the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network which was promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in 2017 and became part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, launched in 2019. Additionally, as underlined during an interview held on the 20 of October 2020, Italy is strongly engaged in peacekeeping activities, in particular the Italian way to peacekeeping is strongly based on the concept of human security. Overall, there is a lot of interest in human rights, women's rights and humanitarian law, a genuine interest towards aspect of so-called soft security. Considering the general criticism towards the terminology used in the WPS Agenda and, even more clearly in international humanitarian law, the interviewee believes that is necessary to be cautious of the risk of opening a huge Pandora's box and losing the very results reached so far. Instead of risking a retrogression, it could be useful to interpret the norms in a evolutive way.

²³⁹ During an interview held on the 29 of October 2019.

During another interview, held on the 4 of February 2020, it was put under focus another major concern related to the terminology of the WPS Agenda and the overall narratives on peace and security, that is exactly the fact of talking of peace and security. There was a normalization process which transformed the term war within the paradigm peace and war into the more acceptable and even “politically correct” term security, so that the very notion of war has been eliminated from the debate, while remaining the concrete reality on the ground.

Huge is also the threat brought by the fact that whilst there is the necessity of a democratic control of the armed forces, which belongs to the civil society, since the armed forces have a mandate from the civil society; the civil society in the Italian context is not interested in accomplishing it. There is a responsibility on the part of the very civil society, there is no counterpart. The armed forces are in a subordinate position in relation to the civil society but what does the civil society say on the matter?

During an interview held on the 28 of January 2020, it was also underlined that when dealing with integrating a gender perspective the focus is always put on operations and not on domestic situations, which means to consider looking at the everyday military activity with a gender lens.

Finally, in the previously mentioned interview military women were defined as stateless people, within and outside the military, in fact they are a minority in the military world but even more a minority in the civil world where they feel like complete strangers.

In this sense, according to the Aspen Institute Italia²⁴⁰, the role of women in the Armed Forces is growing, in particular in peacekeeping operations. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the network created to promote the role of women in military operations and peace-keeping processes where, according to this institute, they can bring greater excellence and efficiency. It is especially important to increase the number of women in leadership positions "starting from girls", that is to develop an educational project from an early age that can encourage girls in choosing this type of career (Aspen Institute 2018).

Looking at the research published in 2020 by the University of Siena, on the barriers and stereotypes which prevent the full access of women to some professions, the same Institute tried to understand why there is a lower propensity for women to choose a profession in the Armed Forces or in the police. The study revealed that, although the military professions are seen by women in a positive way, above all as an opportunity to learn about new contexts and cultures and to serve the community,

²⁴⁰ Aspen Institute Italia is a private, independent, international, non-partisan and non-profit association characterized by deepening, discussion, exchange of knowledge, information and values. See: <https://www.aspeninstitute.it/istituto/identita-e-missione>

there are still several obstacles to choose these careers. The first obstacle to consider is that the Armed Forces are still seen as a place where a male organizational culture dominates. The second powerful stereotype is that in these sectors it is difficult to reconcile the times of work with those of life, in particular in relation to family and children. On the other hand, the attractiveness of these institutions is also quite low. Therefore, there is a need for strategic communication that highlights the social significance of such a profession. According to the Aspen Institute Italia, it is more and more evident that some soft skills are better expressed by means of abilities considered as feminine. The research presented by the University of Siena, “Peace, security and feminine stereotypes”, was also considered to be an important tool for the development of the fourth Italian NAP on the WPS Agenda, in particular in order to understand which are the motivations of girls and how to reform military institutions in order to make them more welcoming for women. In fact,

Now is the time to take stock of the effectiveness of the action plans and it is time to relaunch the reasons why it is necessary to have women who weigh in in military missions, in diplomacy, but also in development cooperation. With a warning: it is important to involve men, but the ability of women to network remains decisive (Aspen Institute 2020).

The study highlighted that, notwithstanding the fact that 20 years have passed since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the opening of the Italian armed forces to women, the size of the female component in the various bodies of the Italian armed forces is quite small: on average about 5.7% of the total personnel, with peaks reaching 7.2% in the army and just 4.4% in the Air Force (2018 data). As for the Police Force, in the State Police, where women have been included since 1960, the female component constitutes about 15% of the total staff, while in the case of the gendarmerie police force - the Arma dei Carabinieri - the presence of women is limited to 4.6% (2018 data) (Executive summary 2020, 1).

On the other hand, the Chamber of Deputies has published more recently data, based on an in-depth study carried out in 2020 and entitled “Relation on the state of the military discipline and on the state of the organization of the army forces”²⁴¹. Accordingly, this data was collected:

²⁴¹ See: http://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/036/005/INTERO.pdf (accessed 30/10/2022)

Table 1: Female staff on 31 December 2020 (Camera dei Deputati 2022)

Tabella 1 – Personale femminile al 31 dicembre 2020

	UFFICIALI	SOTTUFFICIALI	GRADUATI	MILITRUPPA	ALLIEVI	TOTALE PERSONALE FEMMINILE	TOTALE (uomini+donne)	% personale femminile sul totale
Esercito Italiano	371	290	3.621	2.787	243	7.312	95.280	7,67
Marina Militare	CEMM*	218	332	725	180	1.913	29.176	6,56
	Capitanerie di Porto	272	95	297	697	23	1.384	10.962
Aeronautica Militare	384	426	454	506	134	1.904	39.958	4,77
Arma dei Carabinieri	439	1.634	3.275	-	84	5.432	105.573	5,15
Totale	1.924	2.663	7.979	4.715	664	17.945	280.949	6,39

*C.E.M.M.= Corpo degli equipaggi militari marittimi

Fonte: Rielaborazione Servizio Studi – Dipartimento Difesa – su dati tratti dalla Relazione sullo stato della disciplina militare e sullo stato dell'organizzazione delle Forze armate (anno 2020) – Doc. XXXVI n. 5, pag. 48.

According to this new information, the percentage of women in the armed forces is on average 6.39%, with peaks of 7.67%, in the army and 4,77% in the air force (if we consider only the port authorities' section, within the navy, the percentage of women is 12.63%). In the Arma dei Carabinieri the new percentage is 5.15%. On the other hand, though, it is not possible to make a comparison with the number of women immediately after the introduction of the WPS Agenda, in fact there are no available yearly reports from the Italian Armed Forces and also the data collected by NATO in its Summary of the National Reports on Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces start only with the year 2014²⁴². Still, it is necessary to consider that women entered in the Italian Armed Forces only in 2000 and at least since the year 2014 it is possible to observe a slow but constant increment in their number.

As stated in the previously mentioned research by the University of Siena, the reasons for the lower propensity of women than men to choose a military career belong either to the institutional-organizational dimension or the subjective motivational aspect. The presence of certain social and cultural models and role patterns - primarily those that define "the appropriateness" of specific professional realities with respect to gender - have in fact a significant influence on career choices (Executive summary 2020, 1-2). For what concern the possibility to consider military professions as real career opportunities, "push and pull factors" which have been identified by this research are: the possibility of acquiring important soft skills, learning about new contexts and cultures and, above all,

²⁴² See: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132342.htm (accessed 19/11/2022).

serving the community and the nation, but also becoming part of a cohesive community, centred on the ethical values of obedience, hierarchical respect and a sense of duty, the possibility of reaching economic stability and the advantages of a permanent job position (Executive summary 2020, 3-4). According to some participants, this job opportunity can also be interpreted as a form of redemption for women within "a male-dominated society that tends not to value and to disadvantage the professional fulfilment of women" (Executive Summary 2020, 4). Furthermore, the presence of women is considered to be a powerful tool for enhancing the overall quality of these organizations, which are thus "enriched with a point of view, a way of thinking, and feeling", different from the male one. According to some participants in the research project, the sensitivity and the typically feminine attitudes to care, if on the one hand make women less inclined to the use of arms and force, could, on the other hand, be conveniently valued in operational areas, such as in peace operations or, more generally, in emergency management involving fragile categories (Executive summary 2020, 4).

Still, many obstacles have been identified in relation to the entry of women in the Armed and Police Forces by the same research. First of all, the reconciliation between life times and work times, especially for what concerns the times of family and work, particularly following the birth of children (Executive summary 2020, 4). Moreover, although the model of the woman as a "loving mother and angel of the home hearth" is slowly changing also in Italy, in certain social and family contexts, the image of the woman is strongly connected to certain professional roles, usually care roles. In line with this social construction, 30% of the participants in the research believe that women are naturally less suitable for employments which involve the use of violence. Also, according to around 17% of those surveyed, women would be too emotional to work in high-risk situations. The fact of having to disregard the expectations of family members and generate a stigma, of which the family itself would be a victim, is described by some participants as one of the most important impediments to such a career choice. This also leads, according to the opinion of some participants, to the themes of guilt and renunciation, as the legacy of a patriarchal culture which has been internalized (Executive summary 2020, 5). Some participants mentioned the difficulty for women to achieve significant roles in typically male contexts. The fear of not being able to have the same career advancement chances as their male colleagues is therefore considered a further factor to dissuade from the choice to undertake a profession in a working environment which is predominantly male such as military or police forces. Another source of concern is the physical standards required and the fear of having to give up their own femininity (Executive summary 2020, 6).

A lot of these obstacles appear, thence, to belong mainly to the Italian socio-cultural context, in fact, gender stereotypes appear to play a relevant role. It is about stereotypes that are often incorporated at different levels: at the institutional-organizational level in the image that, according to the women involved in this study, the Armed Forces give of themselves, an image that refers to an organizational culture that is still predominantly masculine, "designed by men for men". At the family level which reveals deeply rooted social stereotypes on gender roles and the adequacy of different career paths for men and women. In this sense, the study showed that the participants tend to reiterate these stereotypes, clearly internalised, revealing a self-limitation in professional choices. The research therefore shows the need to act both on a socio-cultural level and on an organizational level in order to achieve the goal of full female participation in these professional fields. At the organizational level it is necessary in particular for these institutions to show a different image, a goal which could be pursued by spreading new information (for instance recurring to the direct testimony of female soldiers or police officers), but also introducing effective measures to support parenting could only encourage female membership. In the long term, all participants in the study agree on the need for action on the socio-cultural level, trying to unhinge preconceptions and deconstruct stereotypes of gender that act on the possibility to achieve the full participation of women in these and many other work areas. Indeed, the Italian reality is characterized by a still clearly visible horizontal segregation (Executive summary 2020, 7)²⁴³.

8.1.3 The Swedish governance of the WPS Agenda

According to the first NAP, adopted in 2006, "[t]he participation of women and their enjoyment of human rights are a prerequisite for sustainable peace, development and democracy". In fact, the policy underlines that UNSCR 1325 has remarked "the fact that women can both influence and be affected by armed conflicts, that women are actors but may also be particularly vulnerable" (Swedish NAP 2006, 1).

²⁴³ Looking at Italy's commitment to the WPS Agenda, an important project which needs to be taken into consideration is "Enhancing Women's Participation in Peace and Security (WEPPS)", implemented by the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) with the ERIS (Emerging Research in International Security) group of Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa, Italy and funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The goal of the WEPPS project is to promote the effective and transformative participation of women in conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution processes in North Africa and the Western Balkans and the final conference was held in November 2020 (see <https://securitypraxis.eu/wepps-final-conference/>).

Therefore, the Swedish Government has based its work on UNSCR 1325 on a holistic view²⁴⁴ of security, development and human rights (HR), considering also that “[t]he link between development, security and human rights (HR) is of central importance to Sweden’s foreign and security policy and also to its policy for global development (PGD)”, which, at the same time needs to be always informed by the concept of gender equality (Swedish NAP 2006, 2). Moreover, this first NAP underlines that it is necessary to “include a gender power analysis and give particular attention to the social, financial, legal and political status and vulnerability of women and girls” (Swedish NAP 2006, 2). Overall, the core concepts expressly put under the spotlight within this policy are: gender equality, development and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls.

The policy also underlines that the Swedish Armed Forces has started to work consciously to increase the number of women in international operations, thanks also to projects like GenderForce, meant to incorporate a gender perspective into international operations. Likewise, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the National Police Board have worked to increase the proportion of women in the Swedish police contingents in peace support (Swedish NAP 2006, 3). Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and the Folke Bernadotte Academy have also incorporated a gender perspective in their activities.

The NAP highlights also the contribution of Sweden for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) including, for instance, appointing a gender equality adviser, but also for the implementation of the NATO/EAPC antitrafficking policy.

In conclusion,

The overall goal of the action plan, and the measures that it lays down, is to make visible and strengthen women’s participation, power, influence, importance, security and enjoyment of their human rights before, during and after conflicts.

Resolution 1325 must be an integral and natural part of both regular and strategic work for peace and security in a broad sense (Swedish NAP 2006, 6).

Thus, the Government will set up a delegation on UNSCR 1325 to meet twice yearly under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in order to follow up the action plan, focusing in particular on empirical analyses (Swedish NAP 2006, 8). In fact, the NAP is a living document, still

²⁴⁴ In this sense in 2004 a special working group under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and with participants from the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministries of Defence, Justice, and Industry, Employment and Communications was established in order to work jointly on the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

whilst its implementation asks for “[t]he exchange of experience between the Nordic countries” (Swedish NAP 2006, 14), its focus is only on potential or current conflict areas.

In the second NAP, adopted in 2009, it is underlined that “women and girls are particularly vulnerable in conflict situations, meaning that they require increased protection” (Swedish NAP 2009, 3). As observed in the previous NAP, also this policy highlights that: “[t]he starting point for the resolution is the fact that women are affected by and can affect armed conflicts. Women in conflict and post-conflict areas are actors but are also particularly vulnerable”, as remarked also by UNSCR 1820 on the link between sexual violence and security (Swedish NAP 2009, 4). Thus, remarking the connection between women (and girls) and vulnerability.

Moreover, considering that the first NAP was adopted in 2006, this document asserts that “Sweden was one of the first countries to adopt a national action plan and the Swedish plan has attracted interest and inspired several other countries and international organisations”²⁴⁵, thus, “[i]t is a natural part of the Swedish Government’s ambitions that Sweden should continue to lead the way in efforts to implement Resolution 1325” (Swedish NAP 2009, 6). In fact, this policy makes various references to the fact that “Sweden will continue to be a leading nation, both with regard to national implementation and in driving developments at the international level” thanks to the common effort of all actors and of both women and men (Swedish NAP 2009, 10). At the same time, it also recognizes that in a joint effort Sweden and the other Nordic countries have greater opportunities to influence the implementation of the WPS Agenda.

Finally, the third NAP, adopted in 2016, begins by making a clear reference to Sweden’s feminist foreign policy, which was established in 2014. Indeed, “Sweden’s feminist foreign policy has a clear focus on supporting women as actors for peace and security. The influence and meaningful participation of women in peace and security is both about rights and effectiveness” and, accordingly, Sweden’s NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions on WPS is an “agenda for change”, still, “[t]o promote change courage, perseverance and political will are prerequisites” (Swedish NAP 2016, 3). In particular, the leading position of Sweden is stressed again in the framework of the overall Nordic cooperation.

Sweden will endeavour to maintain its leading position in the world regarding gender perspectives on military operations/ activities and will continue to offer training and concepts through the Swedish Armed Forces in cooperation with

²⁴⁵ The first country to adopt a NAP on the WPS Agenda was Denmark in 2005, see: <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/> (accessed 05/08/2022)

regional and international organisations. Together with its Nordic colleagues, Sweden will work towards strengthening Nordic cooperation within this field, with more extensive exchange of information and experience and joint action. This will partly take place within the framework of the Nordic Women Mediators' Network. Sweden will also work towards ensuring that robust joint Nordic action continues within the framework of the 1325 activities within the UN (Swedish NAP 2016, 18).

Still, this last NAP highlights “the different needs and perspectives of women, men, girls and boys” (Swedish NAP 2016, 6). On the other hand, it also makes reference to the necessity for “active leadership with accountability” within the Total Defence concept (Swedish NAP 2016, 14), considering that global security challenges include more and more intrastate conflicts but also new threats such as increased violent extremism and widespread humanitarian crises.

In conclusion, “Sweden has a feminist government and applies feminist foreign policy” which considers the WPS Agenda as a priority for Sweden (Swedish NAP 2016, 25). Considering that it is paramount to “support and conduct evidence-based studies and research into the field of Women, Peace and Security” (Swedish NAP 2016, 15), the plan states that its follow-up will comprehend meetings twice a year by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, an annual report on Sweden’s implementation of the NAP and a midterm review, further in 2020 an external evaluation will take place in preparation for the next NAP (Swedish NAP 2016, 26).

Therefore, a major point to consider is the Swedish pride in relation to its leading role in gender equality policies and, consequently, as champion of the WPS Agenda, but also towards its feminist policies and, in particular, its feminist foreign policy. On the other hand, a 2016 report by Operation 1325, highlighted how it is problematic to see that, as it was the case also in the previous NAP, it lacks an internal component.

For what concerns the Swedish Armed Forces, during an interview held on the 13 of May 2020 it was clearly underlined that it is necessary to bear in mind the historical background of Sweden and in particular the fact that for more than 200 years Sweden did not almost use its armed forces and, consequently, a lot of people do not really know what the armed forces do, there is no real connection between the armed forces and the outer society. In this sense, there is a lack of interest on the part of women because they do not even know why they should join the army. In addition, during an interview held on the 29 of July 2020, it was pinpointed that the low number of women in the SAF is

the result of old policies within the military structure and that it is necessary to observe the developments connected to the new conscription system. In this sense, during an interview held on the 14 of September 2020, it was underlined that the small number of women in the armed forces, especially at the leadership level, is the historical remnant of the male only conscription system, in fact only in 2010 a universal conscription system, which remained dormant until 2017, was adopted. Finally, having more women is important not only in terms of equal opportunities and rights but also in terms of reaching out to the whole labour market.

Looking at the contribution that women make to peace operations, a question which was explicitly raised in the first interview was: when are we going to talk about the contribution that men bring? This is a very valid point according to the interviewee, in fact “you put more responsibility on women just because they are women”. At the same time, whilst international operations were mostly the focus of Sweden in the nineties, as part of the idea that Sweden’s security starts abroad, at the present time there is more focus on national protection, according to the idea of “protecting Sweden in Sweden”.

In this sense, in another interview held on the 28 of April 2020 it was highlighted that Sweden is the second country in the world, after Norway, to have a gender-neutral conscription system, but also that many countries, like Sweden, are going back to more traditional understandings of warfare and the military. The same was reported also in an interview of the 7 of May 2020, remarking that since 2014, though the situation went back to a form of total defence because of the newly aggressive moves of Russia, which has also brought to the reintroduction of the conscription. Moreover, the military remains characterized by a masculine culture which is not inclusive, which also strongly influences the participation of women in the armed forces.

On the other hand, as highlighted in an interview on the 15 of December 2020, the SAF has also done a lot of rhetorical work, it became a mantra: “we need women because we become more efficient”, but there is not a lot of evidence in this sense, it is a difficult and challenging route to take.

An important prerequisite for increasing the representation of women in peacekeeping missions is that military women are quite favourable to international duty (as shown by a study in 2008, 56 percent of military men and 70 percent of military women were supportive of international missions; Stenberg 2011, 359).

Furthermore, the SAF has developed a number of different practices to train staff in gender awareness and the WPS Agenda, in particular thanks to the creation of a pool of gender experts such as Gender Advisors, Gender Focal Points and Gender Field Advisors (GFA), first introduced through the

Genderforce project²⁴⁶. Still, the gender education is mostly about equality work whereas it lacks more theoretical approaches (Stenberg 2011, 365).

Another important project is Sweden's Metodutveckling för Effektivare Rekrytering av Särskilda Grupper (MER) project, which was established to identify which factors could attract or deter women from entering the armed forces. As a result of this project, the Swedish Armed Forces has created a system for women who are potentially interested in a career in the military to receive information directly from other women in active service (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 184). Moreover, the Swedish Armed Forces have set specific targets to increase women's recruitment and representation by 2027: the officers' programme, the specialist officers' programme and the military training course aim to increase women's representation to 20 per cent by 2020, 25 per cent by 2023 and 30 per cent by 2027 (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 184). In this sense, Jenny Ström, Commander and Head of the Armed Forces recruitment section, reported: "The goal set for 2020 was to have 20 per cent women, so we're not there yet. But we're very happy that there's a positive trend" (SAF 2020).

According to this table included in the appendices of the Swedish Armed Forces' annual report 2021 (the last available on the official website²⁴⁷),

Table 2: Number of employees per staff category (SAF 2021, 2)

Personalgrupp/kategori	2021				2020			2019			Not
	Planerad personalvolym	Antal	Andel		Antal	Andel		Antal	Andel		
			Kvinnor	Män		Kvinnor	Män		Kvinnor	Män	
OFF/K	3 643	5 815	8%	92%	6 052	8%	92%	6 193	7%	93%	
SO/K	5 870	3 563	9%	91%	3 225	9%	91%	2 909	9%	91%	
Summa yrkesofficerare	9 513	9 378	9%	91%	9 277	8%	92%	9 102	8%	92%	
Arbetstagare i internationella, militära insatser		10	30%	70%	23	30%	70%	39	10%	90%	1
GSS/K	6 897	5 098	15%	85%	5 867	13%	87%	5 477	12%	88%	
Offasp som är tjänstledig GSS/K		720									
Civila arbetstagare	9 082	9 147	39%	61%	8 927	39%	61%	8 133	38%	62%	
Summa kontinuerligt tjänstgörande	25 492	23 633	22%	78%	24 094	21%	79%	22 751	19%	81%	

²⁴⁶ That was active between 2004 and 2007.

²⁴⁷ See: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/om-forsvarsmakten/dokument/arsredovisningar/> (accessed 30/10/2022)

It is possible to observe the number of women has slowly increased in the last years, from 19% of women in the overall amount of people on continuous duty in the Swedish Armed Forces in 2019, to 22% in 2021. On the other hand, though, these percentages include also the civilian staff where the representation of women is quite high (almost 40%), considering only the officers the percentage of women has increased from 8% to 9%, whilst among the non-officers it has increased from 12% to 15%. It is, however, quite impressive to observe that among the people working in international military operations, the percentage of female staff has increased from 10% to 70%; still the note informs us that: “The workers reported here as participating in international military operations are directly employed for a specific international military operation in a specific role, for example as a doctor, nurse or lawyer. This category also includes professional officers who have left the service early and have not applied for a position as a reserve officer”.

On the other hand, it is quite difficult to make a comparison with the year 2001 in order to see what has actually happened within the Swedish Armed Forces after the introduction of the WPS Agenda. In fact, on the webpage of the armed forces it is possible to see reports which go back to the year 2001 (still published in the current website in 2014), yet these first reports do not show accurate data on the number of women, it is possible though to observe this table about the percentage of women officers:

Table 3: Percentage of female professional officers (SAF 2003, 8)

Antal yrkesofficerare kvinnor/antal yrkesofficerare (procent)		
2000	2001	2002
2,9	3,2	3,6

It is possible to see that for what regards the professional officers’ category, women have increased from 3.2 % in 2001 to 9% in 2021.

In addition, considering that since Norway introduced universal conscription in 2014, military service is seen by young Norwegian citizens as a desirable, career-enhancing opportunity, the same trend is expected to emerge also in Sweden (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 186). Still, in Sweden, women tend to have shorter careers than men in the Armed Forces and women service personnel tend to experience work-related difficulties more than men, for example, “feeling that their competence and qualities are under-valued, experiencing pressure and stress, and/or a lack of career opportunities and development” (OSCE and DCAF 2021, 194).

Thence, whilst “[t]he Swedish Armed Forces have been among the forerunners in implementing a gender perspective in military organizations and operations” (Egnell 2019, 41)²⁴⁸, there is still a lot of resistance within the very military organization. Furthermore, this institution can now leverage the conduct of Russia and the subsequent change of focus from international operations, where the adoption of a gender perspective can be particularly useful in peacekeeping and counterinsurgency operations, to territorial defence and security in the Baltic region, as a way to put aside the work on gender (Egnell 2019, 66-67). In relation to this, the 2021 SAF report remarks that: “The Armed Forces' assessment is that gender mainstreaming has developed in a positive direction, through increased commitment in a broader circle of managers, through the integration of assignments and follow-up into regular management processes, and by the fact that the agency has set a direction, including priorities, for the coming years” (SAF 2021, 19). In fact, making continuous reference to the specific requests of the NAP on the WPS Agenda the annual report mentions the policy adopted for the development of work on the integration of gender equality²⁴⁹, but for example also to the concrete need of developing adequate body equipment.

Yet, according to Sweden’s 2020 commitments to the WPS Agenda, training on the WPS Agenda cannot be based on a box-ticking exercise if it wants “to introduce a gender-sensitive lens within organisations for long- term change” (WILPF 2020b). On the other hand, whereas Sweden has contributed to raising awareness of, and improving knowledge about, the link between the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons and gender-based violence (WILPF 2020b)²⁵⁰, there is a lack of focus on disarmament in the third NAP on the WPS Agenda. In this sense, during its role as a Security Council member (2017-2018), Sweden did not emphasise disarmament and non-proliferation as central issues in the implementation of the WPS Agenda (WILPF Sweden 2020, 11). Swedish exports of arms and military equipment are a source of concern; Sweden has ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which makes it illegal to transfer weapons if there is a risk that they will be used to violate international human rights law or IHL, also by means of acts of gender-based violence. Additionally, the CEDAW Committee has stated that obligations under the CEDAW requires State parties to focus on the prevention of conflict and all forms of violence, including through appropriate regulation of the arms trade (WILPF Sweden 2020, 5). Still, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Sweden was the 15th largest arms exporter

²⁴⁸ Indeed, the SAF asserts that: “The goal is for the Swedish Armed Forces to improve, become more effective and even more credible in its task to defend democratic values and human rights, both nationally and internationally” (Swedish Armed Forces, as mentioned in Egnell 2019, 56).

²⁴⁹ See: <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/4-om-myndigheten/dokumentfiler/jamstalldhetsplan/forsvarsmaktens-inriktning-for-jamstalldhetsintegrering-2022-2025.pdf> (accessed 30/10/2022).

²⁵⁰ See: <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/2019-commitments/sweden-2020-commitments/> (accessed 30/10/2022)

in 2014–2018, also to countries with serious and widespread human rights violations as well as weak accountability mechanisms to stop and prevent such violation, including countries which have been involved in the armed conflict in Yemen (WILPF Sweden 2020, 6-7).

In conclusion, as remarked in an interview on the 29 of July of 2020, it is not sufficient to talk about human rights, but it is necessary to talk specifically about women, it is fundamental to observe whose rights we are talking about. Even more,

When advancing women's rights, it is important to promote all women's rights – an intersectional approach should be used and attention should be given to how women's realities are affected by other forms of discrimination such as sexuality and/or ethnicity (Stenberg 2011, 370-371).

8.2 Conclusions: a critical feminist human rights' perspective on the WPS governance

Considering all the data collected throughout this research by means of different documents, policies and reports, but also thanks to the robust support of interviews with several stakeholders, experts and informants; manifold reflections and findings have gradually been developed as an ongoing process during the whole study. Consequently, it is possible to go back to the initial research question and draw some final conclusions.

As stressed at the beginning of this work and most specifically in its methodological section, “[g]ood qualitative questions should invite a process of exploration and discovery” (Creswell 2007 as mentioned in Agee 2009), yet initial provisional questions usually need to become more focused. Accordingly, the broader research question:

RQ: How the WPS Agenda is perceived to have influenced women’s leadership and participation in peace and security processes within the Italian and Swedish armed forces?, was investigated looking at three subsequent research questions:

- *SRQ1): To what extent is the WPS Agenda implemented in the Italian and Swedish armed forces?*
- *SRQ2) Can these institutions be considered as cosmopolitan organizations in the view of the post-national defence and the focus on human security?*
- *SRQ3) To what extent are these institutions committed to the human right to peace and specifically engaged in protecting women’s human rights?*

Consequently, an evolutionary closing answer, made up of some subsequent points, is constructed and displayed in these final paragraphs.

As emerged during an interview²⁵¹ in the framework of IPI, the International Peace Institute,²⁵² and particularly of the WPS Programme, since it is very hard to have a conversation about women, the WPS Agenda is a very important opening tool. At the same time, according to the informant this is a very exciting and frustrating field at the same, considering that countries such as Sweden and Canada which have feminist foreign policies do sell a lot of weapons, whereas in the interviewee’s opinion

²⁵¹ Held on the 18 of November 2020.

²⁵² which is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank dedicated to managing risk and building resilience to promote peace, security, and sustainable development.

an actual commitment to the WPS Agenda would look like disarmament and transformation of the military.

In fact, it is imperative to take into account also the paramount role of the prevention pillar in the WPS Agenda and consequently its interconnection with the legally-binding provision on gender in Article 7.4 of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) but also with the Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In this sense, a siloed approach to the WPS Agenda can be useful for states “to avoid asking difficult questions and making difficult decisions to change their policies”. For example, while Sweden is considered a champion of the WPS Agenda and it is the first country to have introduced a feminist foreign policy, it is a major arm exporter, also to countries like Saudi Arabia which is particularly active in the conflict in Yemen. According to a representative from WILPF Sweden “it’s easier [for states] to be radical at the UN with speeches, but they don’t implement it [in practice]” (Kaptan 2020, 31).

There is, thence, a need to re-politicise the WPS Agenda, which was primarily conceived as a feminist political project: indeed, this means adopting a transformative approach that puts gender equality and equal participation of men and women in leadership positions back at the heart of the agenda. On the other hand, it is also pressing to be conscious, as commented above, that the WPS Agenda is suffering also because of the autocratic trend in Europe, of the fight against the supposed gender ideology which is spreading at the regional but also at the global level.

It is also fundamental to consider that the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening efforts to address broader structural gender inequalities and promote peace, two key targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the WPS Agenda. Yet while the COVID-19 crisis presents multiple challenges, it can also offer an opportunity for change, shifting power to local peacebuilders and modifying the way of working in support of the WPS Agenda (International Alert 2020, 2). It is also essential to recur to strategic engagement with men and masculinities, because it is the only way to effectively achieve the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment championed by the WPS Agenda, challenging patriarchal norms. Indeed, it is impossible to elaborate a genuinely gendered approach in peace and security without considering men, and especially critically examining men’s relationships with violence. However, as examined in the previous chapters, there are limited references to men and masculinities in the WPS Agenda. Only two Security Council Resolutions (2106 and 2242, adopted in 2013 and 2015, respectively) explicitly mention men and boys. UNSCR 2106 recognizes that men and boys can become partners in the prevention of SGBV, for the first time it also acknowledges that men and boys are also affected by SGBV. Likewise, UNSCR 2242 reiterates the importance of engaging men and boys as partners in promoting women’s participation in conflict

prevention and peacebuilding (International Alert 2020, 5). Additionally, as observed the full implementation of the WPS Agenda cannot happen without adequate resources and a proper mainstreaming work, in fact there is still widespread lack of political will to advance this agenda especially in conflict-affected situations, where ‘hard’ security issues are considered to be the priority. This lack of political will is deeply connected to institutional and socio-political norms which are particularly deleterious for the promotion of the participation pillar of the WPS Agenda. Another major impediment is the lack of strategic vision in promoting partnership and collaboration between government mechanisms and civil society organisation, in particular women’s rights organisations (International Alert 2020, 6). Further, it has been remarked many times how it is necessary to adopt an intersectional approach to reflect the complexities of women’s identities, indeed the comprehension of women as a homogenous group can reinforce negative and restrictive gender norms and negate women’s agency. As reiterated so far, solid policies can only be founded on solid analyses accounting for how gender interacts with other identity factors, including locally relevant identifiers (International Alert 2020, 8-9).

It is necessary, thus, to understand the Italian and the Swedish context. As we have observed, for what concerns Italy, especially in certain social and family contexts, the female image remains strongly associated to specific professional roles, often of care: the teacher, the secretary, the nurse, the babysitter, etc. Thus, young women are exposed to these models and do not consider as appropriate professional fields that deviate from them, especially when it comes to working environments with a strong gender characterization, such as that of the armed forces. This is a stereotype still ingrained in the Italian society, or at least in part of it, and strongly supported by female and male models proposed since childhood by families, TV, social media and many institutions, schools included (Executive Summary 2020, 5). In this sense, we have observed that Vinciguerra²⁵³ underlined how the fact that Italy has been the last country among the members of NATO to accept women in its ranks is a consequence of the stereotypes strongly rooted in the Italian society, especially in connection to what are considered to be traditional feminine roles (together with the lack of policies to coordinate family and work life). Still, finally the inclusion of women in the Italian Armed Forces was the result of the efforts of different women who were strongly determined in joining this organisation, such as those recorded by Debora Corbi who in 1995 founded an association of women aspiring to become soldiers that actually lead to a “revolution in the Italian Armed Forces” (see Corbi, 2014).

²⁵³ During an interview held on the 29 of October 2019.

On the other hand, as outlined also by Ms Inger Skjelsbæk²⁵⁴, professor at the Centre for Gender Research of the University of Oslo and researcher at PRIO (the Peace Research Institute Oslo), the branding of gender equality differs quite a lot in each Scandinavian country, notwithstanding their prima facie uniformity. For instance, in Denmark it has mostly been a question of institutionalizing gender equality through legal norms, while in Norway, although they have developed a self-identity as a gender equal country, they prefer to talk of gender equality in terms of postfeminism²⁵⁵. Indeed, according to the interviewee, feminism is perceived as a quite radical concept, and they feel more comfortable talking of gender equality. On the other hand, looking at Sweden's feminist foreign policy, what stands out is the fact that Sweden, being historically a leading power in the Nordic countries, which it actually colonized, developed a form of Swedish exceptionalism also in its relationship with feminism. Nevertheless, although the perception of feminism in each Scandinavian country is different, gender quotas have served historically a fundamental role in all these countries. Likewise, whilst the Nordic region is characterized by rather different security policies, it is quite homogenous for what regards its cultural policies, for example Finland was the first country in the world to give the right to vote to women. Indeed, all the Nordic countries started very early to work on the WPS Agenda and, even if initially the NAPs were very rhetorical and there is an enduring necessity to follow up, it became a kind of a state competition about which country has the greatest amount of gender equality policies (particularly, Ms Skjelsbæk points out that Sweden wants to take the lead in this race). Overall, the WPS Agenda can be seen as a huge global social experiment, even if it needs a simultaneous process of local adaptation, and, looking at the bigger picture, it is better to have this agenda than the opposite (Ms Skjelsbæk for example made reference to the heavy focus on sexual violence within the WPS Agenda: even if it perhaps did not improve the life of the single women involved, it has represented an impressive achievement in the field of international relations). It is necessary to celebrate also “the baby steps”, in fact this agenda has really changed the conversation at all the different levels involved in that system of multilevel governance which the current reality unavoidably is. For instance, as observed, Norway has changed its conscription system in 2015 as a result of the WPS Agenda and now has a gender-neutral conscription system which will probably bring to great changes in the armed forces. Indeed, the military in Norway (as Ms Skjelsbæk remarked) is actually strongly supported and the low number of women within this institution is

²⁵⁴ During an interview held on the 7 of December 2020.

²⁵⁵ The term postfeminism, or sometimes post-feminism, “with a much-contested hyphen”, started spreading in the 1990s as a reaction to the many paradoxes and contradictions in the representation of women (Banet-Weiser, Gill and Rottenberg 2020, 4-5). In particular, “some people used the term to signal a temporal or historical shift – a time after second-wave feminism; others used it to delimit a new kind of feminism – sometimes a feminism influenced by post-structuralist or post-colonial thinking, or, alternatively, something akin to a new (third) ‘wave’ of feminism; while others still used the term to refer solely to a backlash against feminism” (Banet-Weiser, Gill and Rottenberg 2020, 5).

interpreted as an historical consequence of the fact that only men were conscripted until very recently. The same has happened in Sweden in 2017²⁵⁶. In fact, notwithstanding the, at least apparently, paradoxical existence of the very male dominated institution of the armed forces in a very gender-equal society such as the Scandinavian context, in both these countries the introduction of a gender-neutral conscription system has been very popular.

In this sense, we can look, at this point, at the most updated data on gender equality concerning Italy and Sweden. First of all, we can consider the gender equality index of Italy as compared to that of Sweden according to the Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2022 (which is mostly based on data from 2020):

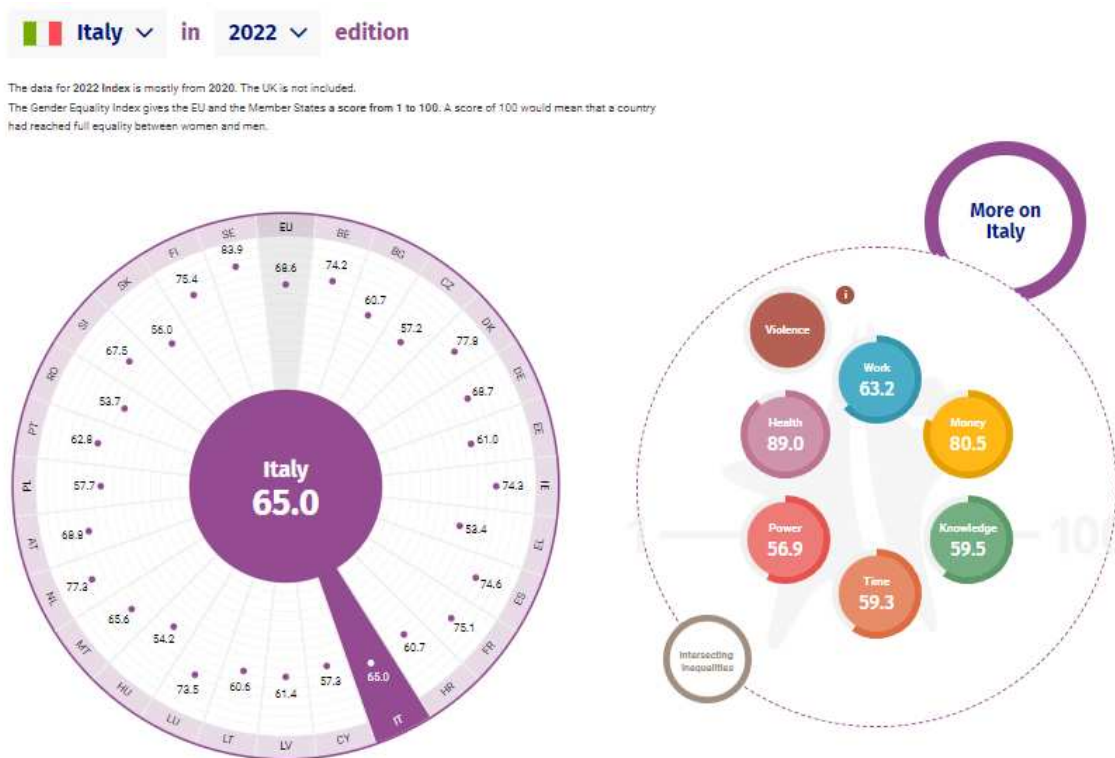


Figure 12: Gender Equality Index of Italy in 2022 (EIGE 2022)

²⁵⁶ On the other hand, reflecting on a very different context, Ms Skjelsbæk indicated that in Hungary there are very high numbers of women in the armed forces, also because of the career opportunities which they can benefit from entering into these institutions.

The data for 2022 Index is mostly from 2020. The UK is not included.
 The Gender Equality Index gives the EU and the Member States a score from 1 to 100. A score of 100 would mean that a country had reached full equality between women and men.

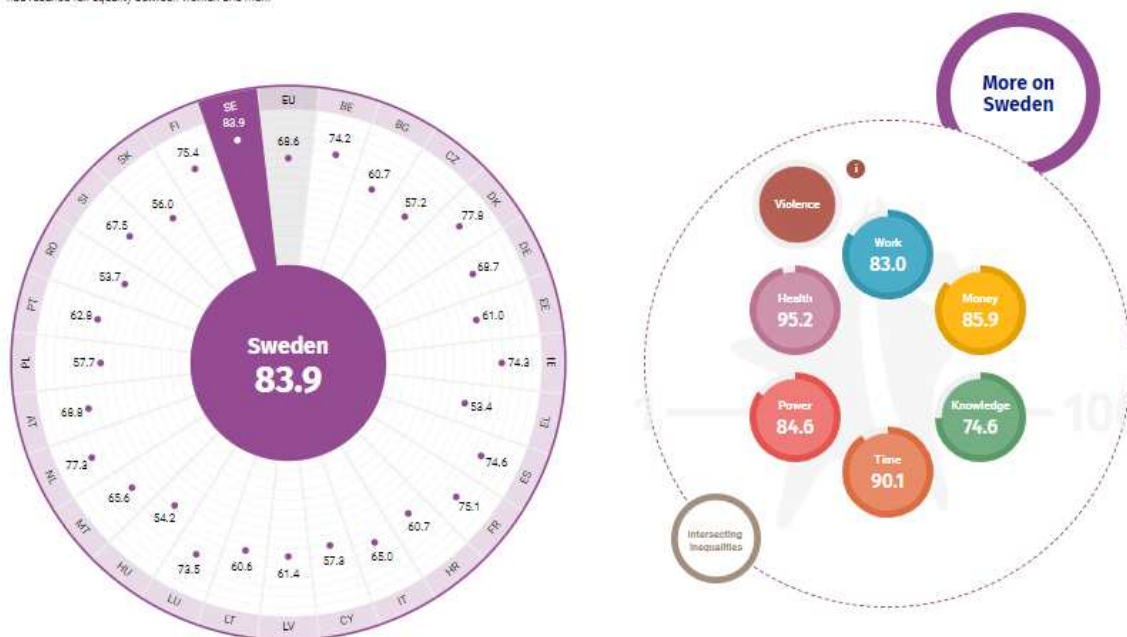


Figure 13: Gender Equality Index of Sweden in 2022 (EIGE 2022)

It is possible to see that the Italian Index is still below the EU average Index, which in the 2022 edition is 68.6 (as compared to 66.9 in the 2019 edition), but it has also increased from 63 in the 2019 edition to 65 in the 2022 edition. On the other hand, also the Swedish Index has increased but only of 0.3 points (from 83.6 in the 2019 edition to 83.9 in the 2022 edition) as opposed to the 2 points of Italy.

Furthermore, the Gender Inequality Index of Italy, according to the 2021 value, is 0,056, which is an improvement from the data reported in the introduction of this research, which was 0,085. The Gender Inequality Index of Sweden is 0,023, which according to the initially reported 2019 data was 0,048 (Human Development Reports 2022). For what concerns the WPS Index, according to the 2021/2022 WPS Index Report, the new Average Index Rating of Italy is 0,842 and the Swedish one is 0,895. While both these countries improved their rankings there is still quite of a gap between Italy and Sweden seen that Italy is 28th out of 170 countries researched and Sweden is 7th (GIWPS 2022). Finally, for what concerns the percentage of women in parliament, according to the last data published by the World Bank the percentage of women in the parliament is 36% in Italy, whereas it was 35,6 % in 2019, and 47% in Sweden, as compared to 43,6% in 2019 (The World Bank 2022). Still,

notwithstanding this very high number of women in the parliament and its progressive policies on gender equality Sweden elected its first female prime minister only in 2021²⁵⁷.

Considering these quite clear data, it is possible to observe that even if both these countries have improved their status since the beginning of this research, the Swedish context is more advanced than the Italian one. Still, there are very similar issues within both the Swedish and the Italian armed forces. For instance, we have observed that during an interview held on the 28 of April 2020 an expert of the Swedish armed forces asserted that since there are very little cases of sexual harassment which are being reported maybe they are actually underreported or some reports get lost, in fact people will not report if there is not a receptive culture. Likewise, an expert of the Italian armed forces reported that since the official numbers concerning sexual harassment are so low, this means that something is not working properly. Rather than the denunciation itself, the problem is to support the emergence of the denunciation, seen also the internal hierarchical order on which the armed forces are built²⁵⁸.

The data which have been collected in the 2019 Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations, the last one available on the NATO website, concerning Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces²⁵⁹ show us that both these countries have, indeed, a very small number of women in their armed forces notwithstanding the quite different domestic contexts.

On the other hand, we can observe that while the numbers remain quite little the specific commitment of Sweden in relation to the WPS Agenda has brought some results in terms of women engaged in international operations.

²⁵⁷ See, for example: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/magdalena-andersson-becomes-swedens-first-female-prime-minister-rcna7034> (accessed 13/11/22).

²⁵⁸ Indeed, the numbers appear to be lower than real cases of harassment, which are often not reported in order to avoid retaliation in the workplace (Brancatella 2022). See also the cases reported in the last “Report on the state of military discipline and organization of the Armed Forces” for the year 2020, pages 33-34, available at: <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/1315503.pdf> (accessed 1/11/2022).

²⁵⁹ See: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132342.htm (accessed 9/11/22).



Figure 14: Percentage of Women and Men in the Full-Time Italian Armed Forces (NATO 2021b, 328)



Figure 15: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men Engaged in All Operations²⁶⁰ in the Italian Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 335)



Figure 16: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men Engaged in NATO Operations in the Italian Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 335)

²⁶⁰ Specifically, EU, NATO and UN operations.

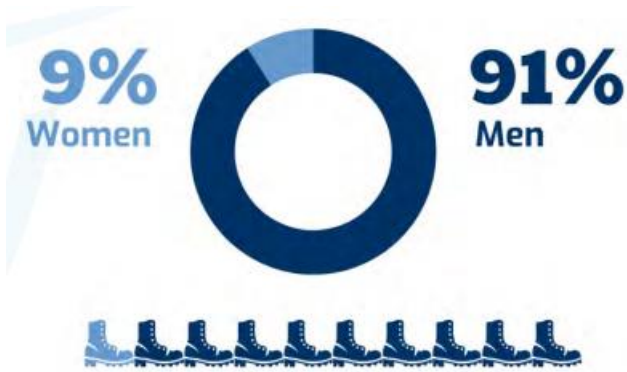


Figure 17: Percentage of Women and Men in the Full-Time Swedish Armed Forces (NATO 2021b, 663)



Figure 18: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men Engaged in All Operations²⁶¹ in the Swedish Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 664)



Figure 19: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men Engaged in NATO in the Swedish Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 664)

Furthermore, even if in both countries the percentage of women in officer ranks is very low also in this case there is some difference between Italy and Sweden, which is numerically favourable to Sweden:

²⁶¹ Specifically, EU, NATO and UN operations.

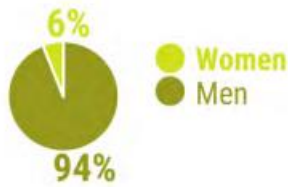


Figure 20: Figure 23: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men in Officer Ranks in the Italian Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 339)

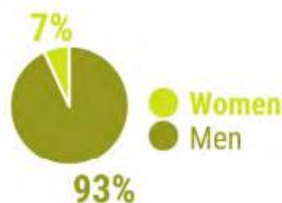


Figure 21: Overall Percentage of Full-Time Women and Men in Officer Ranks in the Swedish Armed Forces in 2019 (NATO 2021b, 667)

As it is possible to see, the numbers suggest that the specific engagement of Sweden has brought to some results, still the difference is so little that is almost invisible.

Carreiras (2006) researching Portugal and the Netherlands according to the most different system design and considering that both these countries, characterized by very different societal contexts, had very little women in their armed forces, realized that it is not enough to have policies about the integration of women. It is intuitive that these policies are important but while interviewing male and female officers the scholar actually understood that these policies were not really welcomed²⁶². Being strongly puzzled by the reason why policies specifically aimed at women's integration were not welcomed, the professor realized that they needed also to be designed in the right way. To have policies is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one, indeed, if they are not understood and not designed properly, they can even work against women. Still, there are many different variables to consider in order to understand what the number of women in a country's armed forces concretely means. It is also very important for the armed forces to design their recruitment campaigns so as to reach different groups in society, they need to segment their approach, use different motivations and

²⁶²At least in the Netherlands, since Portugal, like Italy, did not really have any policy on the topic at the time but was characterized by practical forms of adjustment to the new situation rather than by the adoption and development of formal policies.

a context sensitive approach. In fact, whilst in Scandinavia they seemed to have the right conditions to reach a high percentage of women within the armed forces, in like manner they could never reach the targets in terms of female participation simply because women were not attracted by the possibility of joining this institution. On the other hand, in the Southern countries, at least in the beginning, women seemed to be very interested about this possibility, yet their number remained very low. A similar discourse can be made also in relation to the broad concept of feminist foreign policy: there is not an agreed upon definition, is it an aspiration, a branding or an actual policy? It is essential to be very contextual. The general question is not answerable.

Thus, it is crucial to have a context sensitive approach in order for policies to be implemented and this is the case also in relation to the WPS Agenda: it is important to have laws and legal instruments, to focus on monitoring, measuring and elaborating actual indicators, it is necessary to have a robust legal framework, but this is not sufficient. There is a lot of focus on the normative framework and the policies have been implemented by many different actors, but even if it is an incremental process, it is moving very slowly and sometimes even backwards. There is an overall lack of accountability and awareness about what the agenda really means. Further considering that this agenda is now made up of ten different resolutions it is actually possible to pick up and choose what suits the best according to the specific situation. Likewise, for what concerns the NAPs, they are a piece of a puzzle. Accordingly, it is always necessary to know the context, but also if they are integrated, funded. Thus, it is crucial to know how the WPS Agenda is being used, which issues the actors are in truth pushing with it.

Thence, the way policies are concretely implemented is a very important variable to consider in order to understand the results achieved. It is fundamental to make understandable in the very training why gender is an important factor in security. In fact, there are still a lot of people who believe that gender is a secondary issue and accordingly the policies related to it will even be considered detrimental. At the same time, “gender does not have an epistemological or ontological primacy in explaining social reality (no more than other categories of social analysis)” (Carreiras 2006, 203), in fact it is a very important characteristic of social life but not everywhere has the same relevance, it always interacts, and intersects, with other characteristics, it should never be considered in isolation. Thus, it is necessary to understand which are the specific conditions that exist in the specific context. The idea of rising numbers, this idea of just checking the indicators, reflects a bureaucratic approach to the implementation of the WPS Agenda which can actually be very harmful.

Indeed, as it has become clear, if the numbers of women have been increased by placing people in positions they are not adapt for, this could bring to a backlash. If women are in positions for which

they have not been trained, this creates a bigger problem of a social and relational kind because it generates a perception of inequity. On the other hand, also a lack of institutionalization of policies can be very problematic. For instance, for what concerns the monitoring of sexual harassment and the integration of LGBTIQ+ people, it is critical to be mindful that these issues exist, and that people are concretely facing them. Still, if there are no effective policies to deal with them, it is as if they do not exist, there is no visibility for them. At the same time, as emphasized so far, the single fact of having policies is not enough. This focus on numbers is very tricky, it is not enough to add women and stir to change the roots of structural inequalities: women are still overrepresented in traditional stereotypical roles and consequently there cannot be a real improvement.

All things considered, it is though fundamental to have the normative frame constituted by the WPS Agenda and all related legal provisions. Indeed, even if these policies need to be concretely and effectively developed and implemented, not having the rules, the norms is even worse. Therefore, it is necessary to fight for what is good in the agenda, while being context sensitive, but it is also necessary to change the narrative, namely, to stop looking for reasons why women should be legitimized to be part of the armed forces. The military institution is now looking for new capacities, but this is something which concerns both men and women: indeed, the capacities for which women are required to participate in PKOs are needed also out of men, it is a matter of “new general requirements for new armed forces in new theatres of operations”. Further, as mentioned above and as observed throughout this study, whereas gender sometimes becomes a defining element in its own terms, it never acts independently of other characteristics and positionalities. Consequently, also making reference to the idea of gendered organizations suffers from a siloed view and all in all, every assertion needs to be affirmed empirically by looking at the data. Indeed, the desperate quest and demand for data (and specifically for sex-disaggregated data) as emerged throughout this whole study. In this sense, Vinciguerra, during an interview held on the 29 of October 2019, has clearly asked how it is concretely possible to sustain that women have a fundamental role and there is a need for more women at the international level, and especially in peacekeeping missions, when their number is so meagre that it is almost impossible to draw any conclusion about which their actual impact is.

8.2.1 The road ahead to maintain international peace and security: which role for the armed forces?

Summing up, “[t]he inclusion of women in peace processes is an obligation for UN Member States and women have the right to be present in all peace efforts” (Escola de Cultura de Pau 2015, 4). On the other hand, the participation of women “remains pro forma, without meaningful inclusion or diversity”, the WPS Agenda is downplayed as a “women’s issue”²⁶³ far from serious matters of peace and security, while, on the other hand, “[w]omen’s presence and participation in all peace and political decision-making processes is not a favour bestowed to them, but a fundamental human right” (Kaptan 2020, 20). In fact, it is necessary to bear in mind that “the WPS Agenda is, at its core, a human rights agenda” (Kaptan 2020, 22), strongly interconnected with gender equality paradigms such as CEDAW²⁶⁴ and BPfA²⁶⁵, as stressed by the 2015 Global Study on WPS and remarked again in 2020 by the NGO Working Group on WPS (NGOWG 2020). Moreover, the importance of women’s presence is directly connected to women’s efforts to bring gender and equality issues to the discussions and agendas, and thus to engender peace processes. Still, “[w]omen have to be considered not a as minority but as a significant group in itself”, consequently, even if it will often be the case, women do not need to have their own specific agenda in order to be included in peace processes (Escola de Cultura de Pau 2015, 4).

Having, thence, considered so many crucial points, it is finally possible to look one last time at the initial research question: *How the WPS Agenda is perceived to have influenced women’s leadership and participation in peace and security processes within the Italian and Swedish armed forces?*

The first sub question which was identified was: To what extent is the WPS Agenda implemented in the Italian and Swedish armed forces?

As we have analysed, the WPS Agenda is implemented to a very large extent in both the Italian and the Swedish armed forces. As Carreiras remarked²⁶⁶, the WPS Agenda is actually and currently the main frame to look at women in the armed forces. Accordingly, the very numerous policies scrutinized in the previous two chapters showed us a very strong commitment in terms of policies adopted within these two national contexts, both at the level of the state government and at the level of the institutions of the armed forces. In both cases, furthermore, both an internal and an external

²⁶³ In this sense, “[a]s advocated by the lessons learned from the UN Decade for Women and the Beijing Conference – all issues are in fact women’s issues” (Krause and Olsson 2020, 11).

²⁶⁴ Observing the already mentioned role of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 (adopted in 2013), it is paramount its request to states parties to ensure substantive equality in the implementation of Security Council commitments, see in particular its paragraph 26.

²⁶⁵ Which clearly asks for, among the 12 areas that BPfA examines in connection to gender equality, when considering peace and security, complete disarmament and reducing global military spending.

²⁶⁶ During an interview held on the 2 of December 2020.

focus were recorded, even if the latter was prevalent in both the case studies²⁶⁷. Additionally, both these domestic systems of implementation, these domestic forms of concrete governance of the WPS Agenda, have the necessity to coexist, adapt but also interact in a more active way to the multi-level system where the WPS Agenda exists and is being built day by day by the whole global community. Indeed, “[t]he WPS Agenda offers a privileged point of view over the international scenario, that looks mirrored in its multilevel, multidimensional complexity, with all the sectors and actors involved. Just like in the overall picture, in the WPS Agenda lights and shadows cohabit, but are also a crucial opportunity to see peace work acknowledged as a structural part in the bigger picture on an equal basis” (Del Turco 2020, 43).

Thus, the WPS Agenda is a daily product of a system of multi-level governance of human rights, from the very UN, and particularly the Security Council, where it was born, to the internal policies of the armed forces where it actually expresses on the ground its potential. How much transformative this potential can be, though, depends on many factors and on many paradoxes and contradictions. Indeed, taking into account the prerequisite of “winning hearts and minds” of local populations, it cannot but be also considered the peculiar nature of the armed forces. As underlined also by Resolution 1742 (2006) of the European Union on the Human rights of members of the armed forces in its first paragraph: “The army is the institution which is responsible for protecting the state and defending the community. Combat is its *raison d’être*, the very purpose of its existence, and it is bound by the specific constraints of rules regarding unity, hierarchy, discipline and compliance with orders”. Still, as the Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee states: “We must review and redefine the role, purpose and culture of the military in today’s context” (Coomaraswamy 2015, 302), it is, thus, necessary to look at the next sub questions.

The next sub question requests to understand if these institutions can be considered as cosmopolitan organizations in the view of the post-national defence and the focus on human security and the third sub question to what extent are these institutions committed to the human right to peace and specifically engaged in protecting women’s human rights. It is useful to look simultaneously at these two questions. In fact, as investigated, both these countries display a manifest narrative depicting their armed forces as cosmopolitan militaries directly engaged in post-national defence, a security framework where the concept of human security is omnipresent. Still, whilst this narrative is more explicit in relation to Sweden, whose armed forces have been clearly defined in terms of

²⁶⁷ In this sense, during a study visit to Lebanon in September 2022 in order to observe the implementation of the first Lebanese NAP on WPS (adopted in 2019), it was expressly noticed how this external focus, which is so prevalent in Italy and Sweden, is not the norm in other countries, such as Lebanon, neither is understood (which still needs a context-related analysis).

cosmopolitan, gender aware militaries²⁶⁸, it was present also in relation to the Italian armed forces. Indeed, both these countries were engaged in a post-national model of defence where international and peacekeeping operations were the core activity. On the other hand, as just remarked above, the approach towards security has changed dramatically at the global level, even if its impact and the related effects are more visible in Sweden than in Italy due to its geographical position. For what regards the concept of human security it is really important to observe that in the official policies of Italy and Sweden there is almost no direct reference to the term, apart from one clear mention in the second Italian NAP which explains that the WPS Agenda need to be read together with the protection of civilians agenda reflecting on the concept of “endangering human security and its relating implications” (NAP 2014, 7). In fact, as we have observed in the research, in particular looking at the UN system, but as we have also recalled in the introduction to the findings, the Protection of Civilians (POC) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agendas overlap, and both have a very strong focus on human security. As a matter of fact, the WPS policies are built on the idea of women’s security, where the over focus on the protection of women is even counterproductive in relation to their empowerment. Through this very lens, also the concepts of women’s rights, women’s human rights and human rights are mostly looked at. Indeed, these concepts recur all over the policies and discourses but while there should be put equal emphasis on both protection and empowerment the former prevails, especially within the armed forces. Furthermore, the explicit mention of the concept of human security is repeated almost obsessively in the narrative characterizing all the other international organisations observed.

On the other hand, some thorny elements are increasingly emerging when looking at the evolving nature of the defence and at the actual, possible or potential commitment of the armed forces to the human right to peace and specifically their engagement in protecting women’s human rights. As it has been reported in this study, in the last decades there has been a strong shift from focusing solely on aspects of traditional “hard security” to putting in the spotlight the, maybe even over abused, concept of “human security”. On the other hand, quite recent developments on the global scenario are transforming the perception of security and its governance affecting directly both the Italian and the Swedish armed forces. It is necessary, at this point, to make especially reference to the ongoing war in Ukraine and its world-wide consequences. In fact, Sweden, and the Scandinavian countries overall, has a historical peculiar relationship with Russia which makes it highly aware of the potential

²⁶⁸ Just to mention again the paradigmatic heading: “Gender, Sex, and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping” of the book written by Annica Kronsell which in the third chapter, “The Postnational Defense and the Cosmopolitan Military” asserts that: “The theory on cosmopolitan militaries is applied to address the transformation toward a post-national defense, looking particularly at military organizations in Sweden and other mid-size peacekeeping forces” (Kronsell 2012, 69).

and actual threats posed by Russia to its security. At the same time, though, also Italy has its own relevant historical background: it has been exactly in the middle of the two opposite sides of the American and Russian (Soviet Union) influence over Europe since the end of WWII at least. In this sense, it is extremely important to look at the ratification of Finland and Sweden's accession to the NATO organization. In fact, abandoning their traditional policy of neutrality, which was developed since the very end of WWII in order to avoid conflicts with the Soviet Union, these two countries presented simultaneously letters of application to join NATO on 18 May 2022. After a formal invitation to join the Alliance at the Madrid Summit on 29 June, the accession protocols were signed on 5 July and need now to be ratified by all the member states²⁶⁹.

Furthermore, at the very conclusion of this research, both these countries are experiencing major political shifting, strongly connected to the very recent elections, on the 11 of September 2022 in Sweden and on the 25 of September 2022 in Italy²⁷⁰. Both these elections have brought to important changes within the governments, as consequence of the victory of right and far right parties. In Sweden, in particular, a huge variance, compared to the previous situation, is the disappearance of the government's feminist foreign policy²⁷¹. At the moment it is not possible yet to see how much substantial the difference will be but considering the previously constructed narrative of Sweden as a feminist country this is a giant step back.

Considering the human rights' perspective which characterizes this research, some reflections can be outlined in relation to the human right to peace and women's human rights.

The human right to peace is still a debated human right as noted in this study, yet it is a basic and essential human right considering that peace is a necessary prerequisite in order to enjoy all the other human rights, even the very and fundamental right to life²⁷². With the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the international community has been actively engaged in the promotion and strengthening of world peace through the adoption of different instruments, laws and resolutions. Indeed, the very

²⁶⁹ At the moment, the 15 of November 2022, it is still missing the approval of Hungary and Turkey (see: <https://www.nato-pa.int/content/finland-sweden-accession>).

²⁷⁰ In this sense, it is also difficult to reflect on the last indicator considered in the introduction of this study in relation to the case studies of Italy and Sweden, namely the percentage of women in Parliament, considering that the last elections are very recent. In Italy the last data collected by the World Bank indicated a percentage of 36% in 2021 (The World Bank 2022), whilst the recent elections (when actually Italy elected its first female prime minister) show a lower percentage of women, 31% (Il Post 2022). Likewise for Sweden, the percentage previously reported was 47% (The World Bank 2022) whilst now it appears to be 46% (Dagens Nyheter 2022).

²⁷¹ See, for example: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63311743> (accessed 13/11/22).

²⁷² Further, the conceptualization of the right to peace in a human rights frame can permit to shift the focus from the state to the individual, who is exactly also the object (-subject) of the ICC, an institution which has been constructed on the basis of moving away from the classical view in international law of the state as the sole criminally relevant actor to that of individual responsibility.

UN has been created in 1945 “with one central mission: the maintenance of international peace and security” (UN undated).

Some States and stakeholders have actively been promoting the adoption by the Human Rights Council and General Assembly of a new instrument on the right to peace²⁷³. On 19 December 2016, the Declaration on the Right to Peace was ratified by the plenary of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in a majority vote by its Member States (Resolution A/71/189). This resolution had previously been adopted by the UNGA Third Committee on 18 November 2016 in New York and the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 1 July 2016 in Geneva. In fact, the first article of this resolution states that, “Everyone has the right to enjoy peace such that all human rights are promoted and protected and development is fully realized.” Furthermore, already in 1984 the Declaration of the Right of Peoples to Peace had been adopted by the UNGA in its Resolution 39/11. On the other hand, in order not only to conceptualize but also to concretely realize a human right to peace, it is necessary “a global transformation toward a culture of peace” as demanded in the 1999 Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (Perry, Guillermet Fernández and Fernández Puyana 2017). In fact, it is not possible to reach peace without condemning war, without going beyond the conviction that: “*si vis pacem, para bellum*”. Only removing war from the equation, understanding that it is not a necessary prerequisite for peace, but that “war erodes human dignity, the cornerstone of all human rights” (Perry, Guillermet Fernández and Fernández Puyana 2017), a positive understanding of peace can be reached. In this sense Del Turco (2020, 41) reminds us that the WPS Agenda was born in the International Year of the Culture of Peace and thus it would be important to focus on prevention as to reconcile the two terms of the binomial “peace and security”, which were initially conceived as inseparable like in the very trinomial women, peace and security. In this sense, a decisive support can be that of the civil society, which is already working in order to prioritize conflict prevention. Moreover, to holistically work for the promotion of a culture of peace, it is fundamental to spread peace education initiatives and peace studies at all levels, also considering that there is more and more training and research on WPS in the direction of prevention and peace by peaceful means. In fact, a comprehensive approach of “sustaining peace” is required, going “from conflict prevention (on which, in particular, the UN system needs to place much greater emphasis), through peacemaking and peacekeeping, and on to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction” (UN 2015, 7-8).

²⁷³ In this sense see for instance the Platform for Peace and Humanity and its ongoing global campaign “Towards the Enforcement of the Right to Peace Global Advocacy Programme (2021)”: <https://peacehumanity.org/projects-and-activities/advocacy/towards-the-enforcement-of-the-right-to-peace/>

Furthermore, even if it can be argued that the UN Security Council's core business is international peace and security, as we have observed throughout this research the WPS Agenda needs as well to be understood within a holistic vision where it is "both a peace and security issue, and a critical part of the human rights agenda" (NGOWG 2020, 4). Even more, "the human rights of women and prosecution of gender crimes are indeed crucial means and tools as part of a holistic approach to sustainable peace, and perfectly consistent with a human security approach" (Del Turco 2020, 42). Further, in this perspective it would be necessary to develop much more interaction with the more recent agenda introduced in 2015 and dedicated to Youth, Peace and Security. Finally, a holistic vision is required also to understand the reasons for some of the major critical issues which have been highlighted, namely those raised by a rigorous antimilitarist position and those concerning the effectiveness discourse. As a matter of fact, this agenda has been created by means of the perspectives of very different stakeholders where peacekeeping was put at the forefront²⁷⁴ (in what was probably the only way to reach the UN Security Council) (Del Turco 2020, 43).

Still, whereas all these previous reflections are mandatory, these conclusions need to go back to the work on the field, to "the boots on the ground" of the armed forces. Indeed, first of all, the armed forces are characterized by specific discourses where excessively theoretical approaches need always to be made more concrete in order to be applied. In this regard, research conducted within the Swedish armed forces pointed out that "the gender education offered in the different institutions is mostly about equality work whereas more theoretical approaches seem to be ignored" (Stenberg et al. 2011, 365)²⁷⁵. Moreover, as it emerged also during the training courses which the researcher attended within two main training centres of the Italian armed forces (the CoESPU in Vicenza and the Multinational Cimic Group in Motta di Livenza), the theoretical and the practical levels are understood in their own specific terms within the peculiar world of the armed forces. These institutions are organized according to their own structure, based on the three major and defining levels of strategic (highest level), operational (mid-level), and tactical (low level). In fact, every theoretical concept, starting from the core concept of "gender", needs to be operationalized in very practical terms which can actually be employed on the ground. While being aware of the major role that the WPS Agenda has

²⁷⁴ As confirmed in the recent resolution 2538 (2020) on peacekeeping, where women's role is deemed "indispensable in increasing the overall performance and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations" (Del Turco 2020, 43).

²⁷⁵ Moreover, the same research found it very difficult to understand how much peace education is integrated in the programs offered, in fact it is to define what is exactly 'peace education' (Stenberg et al. 2011, 365).

been playing in the armed forces worldwide²⁷⁶, it is necessary to remain realistic²⁷⁷ as for which expectations can be placed in the arms and embraced by the armed forces.

Taking into account sentences such as “[d]espite evidence that including women improves peacekeeping efficiency and effectiveness, they are routinely underrepresented in actual operations” (Council on Foreign Relations 2018), it is pivotal to understand the necessity to observe the armed forces with a conscious critical perspective. Both the Italian and Swedish armed forces showed a clear awareness of concepts such as human security, human rights and women’s human rights (even if no mention was explicitly found about a human right to peace). On the other hand, both the armed forces clearly stressed over and over again that as armed forces they have a very peculiar role (likewise the stakeholders outside of the armed forces highlighted this sui-generis nature of the armed forces during the interviews).

In this sense we cannot but reflect on the major paradox clearly expressed by Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations: “peacekeeping is not a job for a soldier, but only a soldier can do it” (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2011, 77). In fact, a corollary issue is directly connected to the idea of the armed forces protecting the local population, its human rights and particularly women’s human rights. Indeed, as observed everywhere throughout this work of research, also in this regard what emerges is the constant emphasis being put on the pillar of protection. Consequently, not only the pillar of relief and recovery and the completely neglected pillar of prevention are left apart, but also the very fundamental pillar of participation is somehow forgotten. In relation to this and looking at the debate around mixed gender teams and FETs, during an interview held on the 18 of November 2020, it was pointed out that there is paradoxically no real focus on the local population which is supposed to be protected, on how people actually feel about these interactions because there is no collection of data (and we have come to understand that data is a highly critical field).

On the other hand, the pillar of participation should play a main role, not only considering women in the armed forces but also in the whole context of peace and security (a binomial which seems to have firmly substituted the previous one “peace and war”), in fact as reiterated everywhere in all the policies on the WPS Agenda, “women’s leadership and participation” is key. In this sense, Clare Hutchinson, previous NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, commenting a

²⁷⁶ During an interview held on the 13 of September 2021, some Jordanian officers stressed the work which is being done in order to spread a gender culture within their country armed forces, but also within the gendarmerie and the police. The aim is indeed to spread gender awareness at all levels, starting from the leaders.

²⁷⁷ Without necessarily making reference to realism as is interpreted in International Relations as “a school of thought that emphasises the competitive and conflictual side of international relations” (Antunes and Camisão 2018).

picture of a round table from the last Munich Security Forum²⁷⁸, remarked: “#security #gender isn't it refreshing to see all men around a table, discussing 'real issues' 😊 After 22 years of women, peace and security, still, we are left with both women and gender marginalised. I think it's time to take stock of WPS and raise the bar for inclusive security. If they don't give you a seat at the table take your own. Just saying.....”²⁷⁹

Still as Farina (2015, 202) remarks, an essential reflection which needs to be done when looking internally at the participation of women in the armed forces is that equal opportunities are, indeed, a matter of justice but on their own they are not enough to create a more pacific world. In particular, fighting for a more peaceful world is a collective responsibility, not a women's responsibility based on their alleged moral superiority²⁸⁰.

There is, thus, a need to re-politicising the WPS Agenda, seen that the bureaucratic and technical approaches to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and WPS adopted by international and national institutions have emptied this agenda of its political substance. There is a need to reclaim the political dimension of the agenda, which was primarily conceived as a feminist political project. This means putting the equal participation of women in leadership positions in peace and security processes back at the heart of this agenda and adopting concretely a transformative agenda (see International Alert 2020, 9). On the other hand, without reaching Clausewitz's argument that "war is a continuation of politics by other means", it is essential to always bear in mind what the armed forces are: “the institution that utilizes organized violence to achieve the objectives of the state” (Schaub et al. 2012, 1). Still, despite the fact that “the armed forces are and remain a male product” (Farina 2015, 197) and that the evolving global scenario is turning again not only to the contemplation of hard security, but even of war; the WPS Agenda needs to actually stand its ground, fight back against these counterforces and gain again ground. How can it actually do this? By spreading a culture of peace which needs to be based on an education to peace, on the understanding that “si vis pacem, para pacem”.

We can thus conclude these conclusions by affirming that the WPS Agenda is overall perceived to have strongly influenced women's leadership and participation in peace and security processes within

²⁷⁸ The Munich Security Conference is an annual conference on international security policy that has been held in Munich, Bavaria, Germany since 1963. The last one took place from 18 to 20 February 2022. The motto was "Turning the Tide – Unlearning Helplessness".

²⁷⁹ See her LinkedIn post of the 20 of February 2022: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/clare-hutchinson-4263a72_security-gender-activity-6901182319642628096-7zDA?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop (accessed 3/11/2022).

²⁸⁰ In this view, in the course of the above-mentioned interview, it was also asserted that the military cannot be completely committed to the WPS Agenda, being a masculinized and militarized institution and culture, whereas in the interviewee's opinion an actual commitment to the WPS Agenda would look like disarmament and transformation of the military.

the Italian and Swedish armed forces, still many perplexities remain. Indeed, for what regards the omnipresent pair “women’s leadership and participation”, as observed, the major paradox, among the many which have emerged throughout this research, remains there: the fact that notwithstanding this massive work on the WPS Agenda within both countries’ military institutions, women’s leadership and participation within these two countries’ armed forces continues to be very low in terms both of women in officers ranks and women participating in the armed forces²⁸¹. The numbers collected in this research have indeed showed some better results in the Swedish armed forces in terms both of women’s participation and leadership still the difference is so little and possibly associated to the quite previous entry of women in the Swedish armed forces and to the earlier work of Sweden on WPS that it is quite difficult to draw any relevant conclusion out of that. As observed, both these countries, and these countries’ armed forces, are consistently working on the WPS, still with all their different characteristics, and both these countries, and these countries’ armed forces have been extensively influenced by this agenda. Understanding, though, why women’s leadership and participation is still so low within the Italian and Swedish armed forces and if this is going to change, for instance in Sweden by means of the new gender-neutral conscription system, is beyond the possibility of this study and eagerly waiting for further research. In this sense, another stimulating form of paradox, among the many which surfaced during this research, can give us some final food for thought. In fact, as remarked during an interview²⁸², military women are stateless people, within and outside the military: they are a minority in the military world but even more a minority in the civil world where they feel like complete strangers. Reflecting, thus, on this final suggestion, this study opens some further questions, waiting for future answers. On the other hand, this study is confident about having contributed to a long-awaited analysis of a field which, especially in Italy, was rather deserted.

²⁸¹ As for what concerns women’s leadership we can observe that NATO average of women in officer ranks in 2019 was 14%, whilst it was 6% in Italy and 7% in Sweden. Looking at women’s participation, the overall percentage of women in the armed forces was 6% in Italy in 2019 according to the last report submitted to NATO, 9 % in Sweden according to the same 2019 report, which is under the NATO average of 12% in the same year (based on 27 out of 29 NATO Member Nations who reported on this particular data). See https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/9/pdf/NCGP_Full_Report_2019.pdf (accessed 23/02/2022).

²⁸² Occurred on the 4/02/20.

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