Chapter 9. The Production of the Global Study: What's in a measurement?

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Introduction

> "This is not rhetoric, [Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka] said, adding that the findings were backed by "extensive" evaluations, statistics and academic research."[1]

Pending the 15-year anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the first resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Security Council identified the need for a High-level Review to take stock of progress. To inform the review, the Secretary-General was instructed to commission a "global study on the implementation of resolution 1325, highlighting good practice examples, implementation gaps and challenges, as well as emerging trends and priorities for action" (UN Women 2015d). The result was the report *Global Study on UNSC Resolution 1325*: *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, launched on October 14, 2015. In the introduction of the document, Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon states that the global study "…offers new evidence, ideas and good practices that can help generate new commitments and implement old ones" (UN Women 2015d: 4). The results from the global study were presented at the anniversary Open Debate where the Head of UN Women, as can be seen in the initial quote, opted to emphasize the scholarly foundations of the study by claiming that the recommendations rest on research and are evidence-based.

Academics and policy-makers can probably all agree on the need for a more solid research base for WPS implementation. Basing our discussions on the production and content of the global study, this chapter argues that this requires improving the dialogue across scholars and practitioners and outlines examples of what such a dialogue can contribute with to further

implementation. In particular, the chapter highlights the importance of careful selection and critical evaluation of academic research based on clear criteria. In fact, drawing on academic research for such a broad evaluation of existing WPS implementation as was attempted in the global study requires careful consideration on concepts, design, and comparability of the selected evidence.

Moreover, this chapter argues that we need to recognize that different research fields contribute different pieces of the puzzle on how to move forward on implementation. We focus specifically on two key fields. First, *conceptually focused feminist research* (henceforth called feminist research)[2] has repeatedly pointed out that Resolution 1325 consists of many contested, and sometimes contradictory, postulates and ideas. As a document produced after a politicized process, the global study consequently only presents some of the potential interpretations and assessments of Resolution 1325 and its content. Thus, feminist research points out that it is essential to consider the political context during the production of the report and its impact on the content and use of selected academic research to support most of the global study's recommendations. Second, the assertion by the UN that the study relies on statistics and other forms of *systematic empirical research* (hereafter empirical research)[3] raises further concerns by this research field about the validity of such claims. As we discuss in this chapter, the report does not systematically compile or collect existing empirical research, a necessary condition to substantiate the conclusions of a document with the purpose of evaluating existing policies and programs, highlighting emerging patterns and providing evidence to set priorities of action. In fact, the global study reports or refers to a small number of peer-reviewed and published academic research.

We begin by discussing the politics of measuring the implementation of Resolution 1325 and producing the global study. This paints a picture of the context and brings out some of the main contentions. We then look closer at the content of the global study with the purpose

of displaying what a strengthened research-policy dialogue could contribute with to further implementation. Here we raise key points from the two complementary research traditions; empirical research, which tests assumptions on data to find evidence-based paths forward often using quantitative methodology; and the more conceptual feminist research which critically discusses the foundations for WPS work and its key arguments. We focus our discussion primarily on two chapters from the global study, chapter three on women's participation; and chapter six on militarization and on the conduct of the CSO survey. These chapters are illustrative examples that provide insights into how the content and recommendations of the global study can be further developed through increased research-policy collaboration.

The politics of measurement and production

The importance of the global study should be understood in two contexts. First, monitoring and reporting on Resolution 1325, i.e. measuring progress, has been one of a few tools available for pushing implementation of what is a rather toothless document. Second, the text of Resolution 1325 is rather vague and contains contested elements while seeking to create ground breaking change in an increasingly hostile environment. The starting point for the global study is, hence, quite demanding, attempting to reconcile diverge goals and viewpoints.

The politics of measuring Resolution 1325

Resolution 1325 builds on a substantive international legal framework on human rights and gender equality, not least the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as a long list of policy documents and political decisions, such as the Beijing Platform for Action.[4] Yet, it is a thematic resolution using only vague wordings and without institutionalized follow-up mechanisms. Thus, Resolution 1325's normative imperative

has been stronger than the degree of embodiment and legal worth of the text. This imperative has been used to try to influence the behavior of the Security Council, the Secretariat, and member states (Tryggestad 2009: 544). To that end, many actors promoting WPS have requested increasingly more targeted and detailed monitoring and reporting to ensure accountability (Labonte and Curry 2016: 311). Resistance to such efforts has been steadily growing. For example, an attempt to reach a decision on WPS indicators for obligatory reporting by all member states was thwarted in the Open Debate in 2010. This speaks to the disparity of preferences between more conservative state actors – unsympathetic either to radical changes in gender equality or to expansive applications of international norms at the expense of national sovereignty – and more liberal states who seek to forward the WPS framework (see Basu 2016).

In addition to existing political conflicts, the actual text of Resolution 1325 and subsequently, the WPS agenda and the global study reflect fundamental contentions in their theoretical underpinnings. This stems, as Arat notes, from the fact that the UN has been central to advancing women's rights in two ways. First, by forwarding a liberal discourse on women's rights and second, by providing a platform for transnational women's activism where the latter often has been used for "introducing different feminist theoretical frameworks" (2015: 674). As Tryggestad (2009) has argued, the Resolution 1325 had primarily been adopted as a concession to women's organizations' hard work and recognized them as actors for peace. But in addition, the resolution included efforts by member states forwarding gender equality as part of their foreign policy; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' aim to mainstream gender in peace operations; professional women in the UN system who were fighting for increased participation in peace operations; and actors addressing sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers (Tryggestad 2009; see also Olsson 2000). Hence, the resolution came to embrace a range of theoretical standpoints that were not easily reconcilable - from the more radical,

postcolonial, and critical feminisms to the dominant liberal feminism (Gizelis and Olsson 2014; Arat 2015).

The politics of the production process

After Resolution 2122 outlined the mandate of the global study in October 2013, competition over the interpretation of Resolution 1325 inevitably became part of the process and a politicized process of designing the actual production started. An *Independent lead author*, Radhika Coomaraswamy (Sri Lanka) was appointed. Coomaraswamy had previously served as a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (2006-2012) and as Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (1994-2003). A *High-level Advisory Group for the Global Study on SCR 1325* (henceforth, the Advisory Group) was formed. It consisted of 17 members (of which three were men) and its role is described as providing "engaged advice on the Global Study process on a regular basis" (UN Women 2015d). Members included Ms. Leymah Gbowee (Liberia), Anwarul Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Elisabeth Rehn (Finland), and Luz Mendez (Guatemala).[5] In addition, trying to ensure that WPS was not kept on a side track from other ongoing UN reviews, most notably the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), one member from the Advisor Group, Youssef Mahmoud (Tunisia) was a member of the HIPPO.[6] The assignment to practically coordinate and support the production of the global study and the review in the Security Council was handled by creating "a small Secretariat hosted by UN Women and supported by the Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality in close coordination with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General" (UN Women 2014). In a manner, this was designed to decrease institutional competition.

A consultative and inclusive production approach was designed thereby underlining the political, rather than scientific, character of the process. Given the demanding context of the global study, seeking to create a broad support base was rational. Many specialists on WPS were engaged to contribute with analyses. In addition, 60 member states and international and regional organizations made submissions. Much material was collected during twelve consultations conducted in different settings. For example, joint consultations were conducted in the EU, AU, and NATO, and in a regional global study consultation with civil society of, for example, the MENA region, South-Pacific, Latin America (UN Women 2015a). In this work, consulting women affected by armed conflict was a stated priority. Women's NGOs were also invited to provide information through a survey. This survey, conducted under the auspices of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Cordaid, the International Civil Society Action Network, and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, generated responses from 317 organizations in 71 countries. In addition, 47 civil society organizations, academics, and research institutes provided inputs via a public website (UN Women 2015b).

The result of the entire production process was a 400-plus pages long document launched by the Secretary General on October 14, 2015. As noted by Jenkins (2015), it is a sweeping document balancing a broad and ambitious agenda with the need to protect the reputation of the UN. The global study's recommendations converge into a set of guiding principles with conflict prevention as the leading theme. Local women peacebuilders are depicted as being at the forefront of sustainable peace and confronting current security challenges. The report is divided into ten topics including a chapter that outlines the normative framework for WPS and a chapter on general recommendations and guidelines. The thematic entities cover topics such as women's participation in peace processes and in peace operations, and new challenges such as addressing violent extremism – portrayed as the most urgent current security concern. The last three thematic chapters focus on the intersection of WPS and the

preventive toolkit of the Security Council – mostly perceived as underutilized. For instance, in chapter 11 the global study outlines a framework of allowing the flow of information across the whole system while engaging with the Human Rights Council with years of experience in creating commissions and establishing fact-finding missions (p. 328). Finally, the last chapter highlights the challenges of financing, a key topic for civil society organizations given the financial challenges they are constantly facing when seeking to contribute to the implementation of WPS.

Due to the Open Debate being moved up a week for the Spanish Prime Minister to chair the meeting, it was held the day before the release of the global study. By the time it was launched, a select number of recommendations had already been included in the Secretary General's own yearly report on WPS published already in September 2015. The Secretary General's report also included recommendations from the two parallel UN reviews, the HIPPO, and the *Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture* (see United Nations 2015). Even further weeding of the recommendations was then done into Resolution 2242, the eighth resolution on WPS.

Strengthening the Research-Policy Dialogue on WPS

Although one cannot dispute the importance and the high-level of ambition behind the global study, the report itself is neither designed in accordance with accepted practices of research methodology, nor does it engage with ongoing research debates. While we agree with Jenkins (2015) that the global study is a political document, we still argue that there is a need to seriously engage with it from the view point of two leading research perspectives, the empirical and the feminist. Interestingly, they converge on key concerns on "theoretical standpoints and

concepts", and "data collection, measurement and voice"– though the two reflect different epistemological and ontological perspectives.

Differences in understandings? Theoretical standpoints and Concepts

As noted by Arat (2015), UN's work on gender equality encompasses an interesting amalgamation of processes related to varying theoretical standpoints. These contestations are brought into Resolution 1325 and, hence, the global study. As an illustration, the first recommendation focusing on prevention uses terminology on structural inequality and violent masculinities most often found in feminist theory, whereas the second recommendation instead uses liberal terminology by underlining that Resolution 1325 is in its essence a human rights' mandate (p.13). A more in-depth engagement with previous research could have enriched the global study by providing clarification and nuance.

A chapter where this engagement with research could have been particularly fruitful is chapter six, *Keeping the Peace in an Increasingly Militarized World.* In much feminist literature, "gender" is considered fundamental as it perceives current assumptions about security in the world to lean toward hyper-masculinist, which, in turn, are seen as reinforcing militarism. Therefore, articles in feminist research have argued that peacekeeping, considered as a tool in this militarized world, cannot be used to increase women security (for example, see Whitworth 2004; Willet 2010; Khalid 2015; Shepherd 2016). In policy, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom represents this strand of thinking and has considered the resolution as a platform for counteracting war as such, and not an instrument to handle the consequences of war for women (Tryggestad 2009). When the global study uses a quote stating that "Women, peace and security is about preventing war, not about making war safer for

women", one can almost hear the echo from the Congress of Women hundred years earlier (p. 191).[7]

This theoretical standpoint contrasts quite clearly with a feature that has become a dominant theme in Resolution 1325, women's rights to be included in military peacekeeping; often used as a key indicator for measuring progress. Hence, the global study displays an uneasy balancing but it lands in an emphasis on demilitarization: "[U]ltimately, for advocates of sustainable peace and security interlinked with development and human rights, the value of the WPS agenda is its potential for transformation, rather than greater representation of women in existing paradigms of militarized response" (p.135). Unsurprisingly, this standpoint does not appear to have been supported in the Security Council Open Debate in 2015 where the dominant liberal and functional standpoints in this political context were displayed through the emphasis on the need to increase the number of women peacekeepers instead (Security Council 2015). Engaging with feminist research could have assisted in bringing out the tensions, the disagreement, and the potentially very different pathways for WPS in the future.

Another fundamental concern for both empirical and feminist research relates to key concepts. Concepts are central for researchers as they assist in the development of an understanding on how a phenomenon should be understood and to ensure accuracy and consistency across studies. The global study contains a vast number of concepts, such as "conflict prevention", "protracted conflict", and "insecurity". Feminist research has been quite successful in providing in-depth insights into what different definitions can mean for what is labeled as important, i.e. that limitations in how we understand a phenomenon affect whether or not women's key concerns are incorporated. For instance, if we see "peace" merely as the absence of violent conflict, this disregards the fact that there might not even be peace for women since their security, and economic and political access, have not been an integral part of the peace process (see chapter 7 by Ann Tickner; also Meintjes, Turshen, and Pillay 2001). An

understanding of this is hinted in the global study, which states that "…the content of what we mean by 'peace' and 'security' is evolving..." (p.13). However, it misses the opportunity on providing clearer direction of the goals of WPS in relation to the achievement of positive peace or gender security.

In fact, one could argue that the global study's lack of discussion of how key concepts are defined and measured across the different studies referred in the document constitute one of its major flaws for formulating recommendations. A prerequisite of empirical research, and hence evidence-based policy, is the ability to define fuzzy concepts. When concepts are well defined, one can then develop relevant measurements which can assess, evaluate, observe, and appraise a phenomenon in a fruitful way. While measurements are often associated with the process of quantifying characteristics of phenomena, e.g. peace processes and outcomes, the role of measurement is broader by defining the spectrum of possible outcomes or states of a phenomenon that can be observed. The scaling of possible states of a phenomenon permits researchers, practitioners, and academics alike to compare and evaluate the alternative states of a phenomenon (see Landman 2000; Podsakoff et al 2012).

These problems can be exemplified by Chapter Three, *Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political*. More specifically, how is women's participation in peace processes defined and measured in order to arrive at conclusions on how to move forward? Seen from this perspective, Chapter Three spans all aspects of a peace process which is not defined or clarified, i.e. without outlining differences between process phases, tasks, or actor compositions (for their importance, see Walter 2004). Even more importantly, in the global study, women are consistently mentioned as one group, whether it concerns women in leading state positions or women in grassroot organizations taking part in a peace process. Women are treated as having similar characteristics, for example, bringing a "particular quality of consensus building to public debate" which, in turn, is argued to increase the chance for peace

(p.42). This is underlined in the chapter's introductory quote by O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz (2015: 37), stating that women are rarely belligerents, but that their input is necessary for peace. The assumptions about women in the global study risks essentializing their role both in conflict and peace although research studies, empirical as well as feminist, warn against such oversimplifications (see, for example, Willett 2010; Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011; Karim and Beardsley 2017). For instance, Alison (2009) and Cohen (2013) problematize the role of former female combatants for peace and prevention of conflict. Treating women as one coherent group results in assumptions that all women have the same political perspectives and work towards the same goals. That is not to say that women's activism is not important. There is some research showing the importance of strong autonomous women's movements in driving social change, yet more systematic studies are required to support existing evidence.

Another discussion in the global study concerns the ways in which women's participation can be assisted. Research findings underline the need to place these considerations within the context of the broader findings of research on durable peace. For example, the global study highlights the need to minimize obstacles to women's meaningful participation especially in peace processes (pp. 48-53), often stressing the activism of women's organizations in multi-track peace processes (pp. 54-55). However, empirical research has found multi-track processes to be very few in numbers rendering them unique cases. This means that we cannot learn much on how to move forward from them. Moreover, in general, most multi-track interventions to end violent armed conflicts are rather ineffective and only bring results in very specific conditions (Böhmelt 2010). Research even highlights situations where 'quick fix' increases in women's participation by simply raising the number without considering the political context may become counter-productive because doing so can lead to either very short-term changes or even backlash (Bjarnegård and Melander 2013; Karim and Beardsley 2013, 2015, 2017; Olsson and Gizelis 2015). So, while we must pay much more attention to women's participation,

research points to serious gaps in our knowledge before we can make evidence-based recommendations.

What is measured and who matters? Measurement, Data and Voice

> The 'local' must clearly be the most important factor in our analysis. Nevertheless, women spoke with one voice from every continent to convey a key message to the Security Council: the United Nations must take the lead in stopping the process of militarization and militarism that began in 2001 in an ever-increasing cycle of conflict (p.17).

A key concern in feminist research is the political consequences of what is measured and who provides information. It even argues that uncritical measurements and reporting constitute a problem when seeking to accomplish what it sees as the resolution's main aims – decreasing militarization and preventing war. The reason is that measurements and reporting risk turning WPS into a depoliticized, technocratic process (Davies and True 2017; True 2015). Susan Willett (2010) even argues that the power inequalities of the UN as an institution has tended to overshadow the gender discourse. Whitworth (2004) claims that the current focus on women's roles in peacebuilding have become idealized and gender mainstreaming policies are thus rendered as empty "spaces" for alternative voices to be heard without challenging the dominant and militaristic discourse.[8] Overall, the global study actually fails to address that 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).

In a manner of speaking, this is related to a concern in empirical research. Empirical research is often critical of the low methodological quality of approaches used to measure implementation such as unclear selection criteria of interviewees and non-random surveys

among others. According to empirical research, there is more to drawing conclusions than compilation and using numbers. Importantly, transparent criteria are required to guide the collection of data for analysis. The criteria's role is twofold: first, transparency allows other researchers or policymakers to use the criteria in different contexts and therefore ensure comparability of key findings and recommendations. Second, clear criteria allow different viewpoints to be included in the selection process or at least have an equal chance to be selected. Let us here focus on the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Survey for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security, which was used in order to harvest the voices of 'local women' in combination with the consultations. The global study highlights that the CSOs that participated in the survey were self-selected (p. 6). To some extent the large number of CSOs included is reassuring. The sample, even though not random or systematic, is at least comprehensive. However, it raises the question of selection. For example, did specific types of organizations not engage with the global study – either by choice or because they could not access the website (p. 106)? And, if this was the case, what are the implications for interpreting the policy recommendations?

This consideration is relevant for both empirical and feminist researchers who converge in noting differences between the Global North and the Global South on what is considered to be the most central aspects of WPS. Member states from the Global North have tended to advocate for civil and political rights, participation, and protection from violence whereas non-Western states have instead focused on socio-economic rights and empowerment (Labonte and Curry 2016, 313). It is, therefore, relevant to consider if similar differences might be reflected in the survey had it been designed systematically to reveal such patterns? Here, the lack of contextualization and any recognition of regional concerns are striking given that 40 percent of CSO respondents were in Africa and 30 percent in Asia, two regions that have disproportionally experienced conflict and intervention. If anything the global study promotes

the assumption that CSOs represent one body and speak with one voice. And yet, studies on women's organizations show that policies advocated by the UN and external donors might often lead to decoupling and failures if not contextualized (Gizelis and Joseph 2016). Regional variations in terms of the priorities given in survey responses can speak to the relevance of engaging with literatures that outline different WPS pathways and plausible outcomes (p. 111).

Conclusions and the way forward

The global study is an outcome of a political process. Hence, the final report's lack of engagement with academic research is not surprising. However, we argue that such an engagement is critical if we are to chart a successful way forward. Notably, empirical research underlines the importance of clarity in key concepts when developing recommendations based on lessons drawn over space and time. Similarly, feminist research brings out key considerations when using measurements and reporting to advance implementation in order for WPS to be a platform for transformative change. They both underline the importance of including alternative and dissenting voices. This is an issue which to an extent has been echoed in both feminist and empirical research concerns in relation to the need for transparency in the collection of data and analysis of data to reveal trends in differences between regions, countries, and socio-economic groups. Collectively, these research perspectives strongly argue that not all women speak with one voice, but that all women matter. As the Secretary General now reforms the UN's work for peace and security, we suggest that an in-depth engagement with research can contribute to a strengthened process forward on WPS.

Notes

[1] Original quote reads "she" (name inserted by authors) and is from Security Council (2015).

[2] In the UN context, Arat (2015) identifies Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Radical feminism, Socialist feminism, Third World feminism, and Critical feminism in relation to the use of intersectionality. In this paper, we refer primarily to critical feminist research.

[3] Here we mean primarily positivist research that uses rigorous empirical methods to explore and test ideas and suggestions. In a sense, we mean a form of "empirical feminism" in research (see Reiter 2015).

[4] See Chapter 3 where Christine Chinkin analyses the international legal framework within which made UNSCR 1325 possible; also Tryggestad 2009; Labonte and Curry 2016, 312.

[5] For a full list, see (UN Women 2015d).

[6] This did not happen automatically. The first appointment of the HIPPO panel included very few women and no coordination with the WPS. This led to massive protest resulting in revisions.

[7] Similar to when the congress in the Hague in 1915 found that "[t]his International Congress of Women opposes the assumption that women can be protected under the conditions of modern warfare" (International Congress of Women 1915).

[8] See also Cohn 2008.

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