The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction

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WMDC

This paper has been commissioned by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. Its purpose is to function as food-for-thought for the work of the Commission. The Commission is not responsible for views expressed in this paper.

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by **Carol Cohn, with Felicity Hill and Sara Ruddick**

When trying to think about how to solve the problems created by the existence of weapons of mass destruction, ideas about gender matter. Although the linkage between weapons of mass destruction and gender will be unfamiliar for many readers, this paper[i] argues that ideas and expectations about gender are woven through the professional and political discourses that shape all aspects of how weapons of mass destruction are considered, desired and addressed. To address WMD challenges more effectively, it is essential to take into consideration how armament and disarmament policies and practices are influenced by ideas about masculinity. An understanding of how these limitations occur can play a crucial role in helping break some of the persistent barriers to achieving disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is important to stress that this paper will focus on ideas about gender, rather than on men or women *per se*. A different paper will need to be written that would look at men's and women's relations to WMD. That paper would explore the implications of the fact that women have been largely absent from the scientific and political decisionmaking about WMD,[ii] in spite of the long and consistent history of women's organisations advocating for the total disarmament of biological, chemical and particularly nuclear weapons.[iii] It might also look at some of the different ways that men's and women's bodies are affected by the development and testing of these weapons.[iv] The present article, however, does not focus on women's or men's bodies, nor their political perspectives or activism; instead it will focus on how ideas about gender – what is masculine or feminine, powerful or impotent – affect our efforts towards halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and bringing about effective disarmament.

Defining Gender

Before proceeding with the argument, we need to look at the oft misused and misunderstood term "gender" and clarify its multiple meanings and our use of it. "Gender" has increasingly been employed to make a distinction between biology and culture – that is, the biological differences between male and female bodies on the one hand, and the *meaning* given to those differences on the other. People in every culture have biologically male or female bodies, but what it means to be "masculine" or "feminine" is different for different cultures and changes over time. What kinds of capabilities or personality traits we expect women or men to have, the kinds of activities, jobs, and family roles we think it appropriate for them to take on, what it means to be a "real man" or a "good woman" – all of these are part of the cultural meaning given to biological difference.

Gender is not only about individual identity or what a society teaches us a man or woman, boy or girl should be like. Gender is also a way of structuring relations of power – whether that is within families, where the man is often considered the head of the household, or in societies writ large, where men tend to be the ones in whose hands political, economic, religious and other forms of cultural power are concentrated.

These two phenomena – individual identity and structures of power – are significantly related to each other. Hence it is the meanings and characteristics culturally associated with masculinity

that make it appear "natural" and just for men to have the power to govern their families and their societies. That is, if as a society we come to believe that people with biologically male bodies are the ones most likely to be strong, rational, prudent, responsible, objective, and willing to fight if necessary (*also known as* "masculine"), we will think it right that they are the ones to rule. Conversely, if as a society we come to believe that people with female bodies are weak, emotional, irrational, passive, nurturing, and in need of protection (*also known as* "feminine"), we will think it natural and right that most women's lives should be limited to the private sphere of home and family.

A next crucial step in thinking about gender is to realise that its effects go beyond the meanings ascribed to male and female bodies, and the concomitant ways that power is (unequally) distributed amongst men and women. Gender also functions as a symbolic system: our ideas about gender permeate and shape our ideas about many other aspects of society beyond male-female relations – including politics, weapons, and warfare.

Male	Female
Thought	Emotion
Active	Passive
Rational	Irrational
Strength	Weakness
Mind	Body
Courage	Fear
Intelligence	Cunning
Self	Other
Primary	Secondary
Serious	Playful
Concrete	Abstract
Doer	Done
Reality	Appearance
Science	Humanities
Philosophy	Myth
Order	Disorder
Permanent	Ephemeral
Dominate	Subordinate
Confident	Fearful
Simplicity	Complexity
Truth	Fiction
Classical	Romantic
Centre	Margin
Master	Slave
Teacher	Student

The easiest way to see this is to look at some of the adjectives associated with masculinity (e.g., strong, rational, prudent, active, objective) and femininity (e.g., weak, irrational, impulsive, passive, subjective). What is immediately apparent is:

- first, they constitute dichotomous pairs of characteristics which are seen as mutually exclusive (e.g., strong/weak, active/passive, etc.);

- second, in each case, the "masculine" side of the pair is valued more highly than the "feminine" one.

- third, the very meaning of masculinity and femininity is defined through its relation to its "opposite". That is, they are dependent upon each other for their meaning: masculinities do not exist except in contrast to femininities and vice versa. This means that a man could not be seen as insufficiently masculine or "wimpy" unless we have an idea of the "feminine" characteristics "real" men must avoid.

Critically, this creation of gender-dichotomised pairings extends far beyond a list of human characteristics: think, for example, of culture/nature; analysis/intuition; order/disorder; assert/compromise; military/civilian. Here, too, although these pairs have no necessary relation to male or female bodies, in US (the dominant Western) culture, one side of each pair is culturally coded "masculine", the other "feminine", and the "masculine is the more highly valued. The effect of this symbolic gender-coding is that any human action or endeavour, no matter how unrelated to biological maleness or femaleness, is perceived as more or less masculine or feminine – even if only at a subconscious level – and valued or devalued accordingly. In other words, ideas about gender not only shape how we perceive men and women; they shape how we see the world. And they have political effects.

Gender, National Security and Weapons

Weapons of mass destruction are not only physical objects, they are political objects; their symbolic importance is key in national and international security debates, as well as in domestic politics. And one aspect of political discourse – so obvious as to be usually taken for granted – is that gendered terms and symbols are an integral part of how political issues are thought about and represented, and an integral part of the image-production associated with political leaders. There is often, for instance, an anxious preoccupation with affirming manhood on the part of candidates for political office, for whom it is dangerous to be seen as "soft" or "wimpish": recent US politics provides the example of the fevered Republican efforts to undermine presidential candidate John Kerry's image as a leader by undermining his portrayal as a courageous warrior in Vietnam; or the pre-election spectacle of President George W. Bush striding across the deck of an aircraft carrier in his flight suit, proclaiming victory in Iraq in front of a "mission accomplished" banner.[v]

There are also many instances in which political masculinity is linked with preparedness to use military action and to wield weapons. During the first Bush administration 1988-1992, for example, the US media speculated whether George H. W. Bush had finally "beat the wimp factor" by going to war against Iraq. In these and other cases, we see the link between war and a heroic kind of masculinity, which depends on a feminised and devalued notion of peace as unattainable, unrealistic, passive and (it might be said) undesirable.

But it is not only the political context within which weapons of mass destruction are situated that is deeply gendered. So are the practical and symbolic dimensions of weapons themselves. This is perhaps most obvious in relation to small arms. Governments and international institutions are increasingly accepting that small arms and light weapons (SALW) are practically associated with masculinity in many cultures, with men as the vast majority of the buyers, owners or users. After early policy failures, it is also becoming increasingly recognised that the symbolic associations of SALW with masculinity have political effects. Specifically, in relation to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, real barriers to effective SALW disarmament are created by the ways in which masculine identities and roles have become conjoined with weapons possession for many (male) combatants.

There is now general recognition that there are significant gender dimensions to the possession of small arms and light weapons. It would be naive to assume that this association suddenly becomes meaningless when we are talking about larger, more massively destructive weapons. And more naïve still to think that it doesn't matter. Given the dubious military value and problematic usability of most WMD, a focus on their symbolic dimensions has to be central to any effort at weapons reduction or disarmament. Without gender analysis, attempts to untangle and understand the symbolic value and meaning of WMD are incomplete and inadequate.

Some brief examples illustrate this important dimension. When India exploded five nuclear devices in May 1998, Hindu nationalist leader Balasaheb Thackeray explained "we had to prove that we are not eunuchs". An Indian newspaper cartoon depicted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee propping up his coalition government with a nuclear bomb. "Made with Viagra"

the caption read. Images such as these rely on the widespread metaphoric equation of political and military power with sexual potency and masculinity. Political actors incorporate sexual metaphors in their representations of nuclear weapons as a way to mobilise gendered associations and symbols in creating assent, excitement, support for, and identification with the weapons and their own political regime; in other words, the symbolic gendered dimensions of nuclear weapons are not trivial; they are an integral part of accomplishing domestic and political objectives.

That a nation wishing to stake a claim to being a regional or world power should choose nuclear weapons as its medium for doing so is too frequently characterised as "natural": advanced military destructive capacity identifies a state as powerful. The "fact" that nuclear weapons are being instituted as the currency for establishing a hierarchy of state power is unremarked, unanalysed, and taken for granted by most analysts. By contrast, feminist theory, using a historical and post-colonial lens, is better able to understand nuclear weapons' enshrinement as the emblem of power not as a natural fact, but as a social one, produced by the actions of states. Thus, when the United States, with the most powerful economy and conventional military in the world, acts as though its power and security are guaranteed only by a large nuclear arsenal, it creates a context in which nuclear weapons become the ultimate necessity for, and symbol of, state security. And when the United States (or any other nuclear power) works hard to ensure that other countries don't obtain nuclear weapons, it is creating a context in which it is perceived as keeping other nations down, to subordinate and emasculate them – to render them eunuchs! Hence, regardless of their military utility nuclear weapons are turned into the ultimate arbiter of political/masculine power. Balasaheb Thackeray did not invent the meaning of India's nuclear tests out of thin air.

Why do ideas about gender matter for dealing with WMD?

The ways in which ideas about gender are embedded in ideas about WMD matter for two central reasons. Firstly, ideas about gender serve to shape, limit and distort the very discourses – both professional and political – that have been developed to think about WMD, and so have political consequences that have a crucial bearing on our efforts to try to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation. Secondly, ideas about gender also shape, limit and distort the national and international political processes through which decisions about WMD are made. Ideas about strength, protection, rationality, security and control have a critical impact on governmental and intergovernmental policy, as well as functioning at a large-scale societal level, where a certain notion of aggressive masculinity is equated with human nature, as in the phrase "disarmament would be nice but it's against human nature". We must be aware of, and find ways to address, these gendered assumptions if we are to transform the intellectual and political processes that have so long impeded effective WMD disarmament.

Ideas about gender shape, limit and distort professional and political discourses about WMD

We start with a true story, told to Dr. Cohn by a member of a group of nuclear strategists, a white male physicist:

"Several colleagues and I were working on modelling counterforce nuclear attacks, trying to get realistic estimates of the number of immediate fatalities that would result from different deployments. At one point, we re-modelled a particular attack, using slightly different assumptions, and found that instead of there being 36 million immediate fatalities, there would only be 30 million. And everybody was sitting around nodding, saying, 'Oh yes, that's great, only 30 million,' when all of a sudden, I *heard* what we were saying. And I blurted out, 'Wait, I've just heard how we're talking – *Only* 30 million! *Only* 30 million human beings killed instantly?' Silence fell upon the room. Nobody said a word. They didn't even look at me. It was awful. I felt like a woman." The physicist added that henceforth he was careful never to blurt out anything like that again.

Why did he feel that way? First, he was transgressing a code of professional conduct. Expressing concern about human bodies is not the way you talk within the terms of the strategic expert discourse, which is, after all, a discourse about weapons and their relation to each other, not to human bodies. But even worse than that, he evinced some of the characteristics on the "female" side of the dichotomies – in his "blurting" he was being impulsive, uncontrolled, emotional, concrete, upset and attentive to fragile human bodies. Thus, the hegemonic discourse of gender positioned him as feminine, which he found doubly threatening. It was not only a threat to his own sense of self as masculine, his gender identity; it also positioned him in the devalued or subordinate position in the discourse. Thus, both his statement, "I felt like a woman," and his subsequent silence in that and other settings, are completely understandable. To find the strength of character and courage to transgress the strictures of both professional and gender codes and to associate yourself with a lower status is very difficult.

This story is not simply about one individual, his feelings and actions; it illustrates the role and meaning of gender discourse in the defence community. The impact of gender discourse in that room (and countless others like it) is that some things are excluded and get left out from professional deliberations. Certain ideas, concerns, interests, information, feelings and meanings are marked in national security discourse as feminine, and devalued. They are therefore very difficult to speak, as exemplified by the physicist who blurted them out and wished he hadn't. And if they manage to be said, they are also very difficult to hear, to take in and work with seriously. For the others in the room, the way in which the physicist's comments were marked as feminine and devalued served to delegitimate them; it also made it very unlikely that any of his colleagues would find the courage to agree with him.

This example should not be dismissed as just the product of the idiosyncratic personal composition of that particular room; it is replicated many times and in many places. Women, in professional and military settings, have related experiences of realising that something terribly important is being left out but feeling constrained, as if there is almost a physical barrier preventing them from pushing their transgressive truths out into the open.

What is it that cannot be spoken? First, any expression of an emotional awareness of the desperate human reality behind the sanitised abstractions of death and destruction in strategic deliberations. Similarly, weapons' effects may only be spoken of in the most clinical and abstract terms, and usually only by those deemed to have the appropriate professional qualifications and expertise.

What gets left out, then, is the emotional, the concrete, the particular, human bodies and their vulnerability, human lives and their subjectivity – all of which are marked as feminine in the binary dichotomies of gender discourse. In other words, gender discourse informs and shapes nuclear and national security discourse, and in so doing creates silences and absences. It keeps things out of the room, unsaid, and keeps them ignored if they manage to get in. As such, it degrades our ability to think well and fully about nuclear weapons and national security, and so shapes and limits the possible outcomes of our deliberations.

With this understanding, it becomes obvious that defence intellectuals' standards of what constitutes "good thinking" about weapons and security have not simply evolved out of trial and error; it is not that the history of nuclear discourse has been filled with exploration of other ideas, concerns, interests, information, questions, feelings, meanings and stances which were then found to create distorted or poor thought. On the contrary, serious consideration of a whole range of ideas and options has been preempted by their gender coding, and by the feelings evoked by living up to or transgressing normative gender ideals. To borrow a strategists' term, we can say that gender coding serves as a "preemptive deterrent" to certain kinds of thought about the effects and consequences of strategic plans and WMD.[vi]

Ideas about gender shape, limit and distort the national and international political processes through which decisions about WMD are made

The impact of ideas about gender extends beyond the realm of the professional discourse of weapons experts; ideas about gender also affect the national and international processes through which decisions are made about the acquisition of weapons, the maintenance of weapons stockpiles, and disarmament initiatives. To see this, we need to treat seriously a phenomenon that is so taken for granted that it is usually unremarked – that both war and weapons are currently associated with masculinity. What does it mean to take this seriously? What effects does this have?

One telling example comes from 1990, after Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, during the build-up to the first Gulf War. During a speculative discussion among a group of defence intellectuals and opinion-formers, one declared, "Look, the question is, "Does George [H.W.] Bush have the stones for war?" That is, does he have the masculine strength and courage, is he man enough, to lead his country into war?[vii]

Look at what happens when the question is framed this way. Even though the man who asked this question might not endorse the statement "war is a good thing", he equated a willingness to go to war with having "stones" – a euphemism for balls, generally regarded as a positive attribute (for a man). Hence "going to war" is given the positive valence that masculinity – being a "real man" – is understood to possess. Even more importantly, this equation carries a deeper implication: not only does it give to waging war some of the positive value attached to masculinity; it also makes it much more difficult not to go to war.

By extension, the research, development, production, stockpiling and deployment of weapons and delivery systems – without which going to war is impossible – are also equated with manliness, using gender-resonant language about the importance of "demonstrating our strength and resolve". As a consequence, it is easier to delegitimise proponents of cutting military spending. Whether their motivations are disarmament or getting rid of expensive weapons programmes that make no military or strategic sense, opponents of military spending are undermined by accusations of being "weak on defence". They are portrayed as feeble, wimpy or lacking "balls" – the kiss of death in American politics.

Another example, from US public discourse after 9/11, is some variation on the theme, "We should bomb `em back to the Stone Age, and then make the rubble bounce."[viii] Frequently expressed on talk radio shows or internet discussions, this kind of rhetoric hardly represents a rational strategic calculation; rather, it is about the sheer pleasure and thrill of having so much destructive power. While astounding in its amorality and ignorance, such utterances are meant to elicit admiration for the wrathful manliness of the speaker. The effects of this kind of speech are pernicious. The implication is that to avoid responding to a political crisis by going to war shows a lack of balls. Not to be ready, willing and able to demolish your opponents by "bombing `em back to the Stone Age" is to be weak. In such a charged and masculinised context, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to develop and advocate other forms of security policy.

By correlation, although the practice of diplomacy is also ritualised and masculinised in many ways, US culture has never accorded diplomacy the strong, muscular attributes that are heaped on soldiering. US movies are not filled with brawny movie stars playing heroes in the diplomatic corps. Manly action heroes seldom carry briefcases (unless they are undercover James Bonds). Nor do they, in the cultural meanings of masculinity dominant in the United States, make treaties and "depend" on the other parties to honour their obligations under those treaties. This point was acutely represented in a recent political cartoon in a US newspaper that featured the earth as a jigsaw puzzle with one piece missing from the centre. President George W. Bush was depicted walking away with that piece under his harm saying, "treaties are for wimps".

In other words, consulting, negotiating, acknowledging interdependence and – worst of all – depending on others, are activities that are culturally marked down as weak and lacking in masculinity. In the US cultural and symbolic system, trying to get what you want by talking and

persuading, depending, trusting and compromising is feminine; having the power to enforce your will is much more masculine.

The use of inspections rather than military attack, as the means to ensure that a state does not build and deploy weapons of mass destruction, would be another example of a culturally feminised approach to achieve the political objective of non-proliferation. Living in the United States during the build up to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the symbolic gendered overtones of the difference between responding to a "bully" with inspections or military action was enormously significant, especially for mobilising political support. Despite the actual, and now proven, effectiveness of the United Nations' UNSCOM, UNMOVIC and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring and disarmament regimes in Iraq during the 1990s, the route of inspections was belittled as ineffectual, wimpy, and insufficiently active and aggressive; critically, it was portrayed as simply not a powerful enough way to respond to the perceived threat of a "rogue actor".   On the contrary, a massive military campaign in which the United States would "smoke `em out of their holes and their WMD with them" was presented as a far more powerful and satisfying way to deal with the problem.[ix]   A decade of inspections was portrayed as having been impotent – the worst form of demasculinisation. In contrast, it was taken for granted, at least by agenda setting leaders and most of the US media, that the only real way to deal was to have the enemy at the other end of the barrel of a gun. The way in which gender associations were intertwined with these two different approaches facilitated the selling of war as the right policy - and made it difficult to argue for further inspections.

The fact that the inspections regime worked was lost in this masculinised landscape. That this important recognition is still largely invisible to Americans, if not to the rest of the world, is even greater testament to the power of ideas about gender and the way gendered meanings are attached to all kinds of activities and discourses. In short, the gender-coding of "passive, wimpy" inspections creates a political "reality" in which it doesn't matter that the inspections worked. Despite their success, inspections are identified as weak and ineffectual, an inappropriate tool for the most muscular nation on earth.

That invasion should "self-evidently" seem to be a more potent, effective course of action than inspection is connected to another gendered phenomenon: the efficacy of violence is consistently over-estimated, while its costs are undercounted.[x] The corollary of this is that the efficacy of nonviolent means is consistently underestimated, and its costs exaggerated. This sleight of hand cannot be understood without comprehending the impact of ideas about gender. The context in which the IAEA and its inspections partners in Iraq, UNSCOM and UNMOVIC, had to work was one in which multilateralism and treaties were seen as weak, temporary alternatives to national (militarised) action. This constructed perception of treaties as feeble and effeminate routes to security is an enormous obstacle that advocates of disarmament and human security have to struggle through, no matter how credible or rational their case may be.

Gender and Proliferation[xi]

"Proliferation" is not a mere description or mirror of a phenomenon that is "out there" but rather a very specific way of identifying and constructing a problem concerning weapons. Proliferation, as used in Western political discourse, does not simply refer to the "multiplication" of weapons of mass destruction on the planet. Rather, it constructs some WMD as a problem, and turns a blind eye to others. With nuclear weapons, for example, it is able to do this by assuming pre-existing, legitimate possessors, implicitly not only entitled to those weapons, but to modernise and develop new generations of them as well. The "problematic" nuclear weapons are only those that "spread" into the arsenals of other, formerly non-possessor states. This is the basis for the "licit/illicit" distinction commonly found in arms control discourse, which does not refer to the nature of the weapons themselves, nor even to the purposes for which they are intended, but on who possesses them. The nuclear non-proliferation regime enshrined "we got there first" as a basis for arms control.

Most people in the world view WMD as intrinsically morally indefensible, no matter who possesses them. In addition to the abhorrence attached to their use, the wide array of social, economic, political and health costs associated with their development and deployment are repugnant. Rejecting proliferation discourse's implicit division of "good" and "bad," "safe" and "unsafe" WMD, (defined as such depending on who possesses them), it is imperative now to understand how some WMD are rendered invisible or benign (ours) and others visible and malignant (theirs).

In drawing a distinction between "the Self" and the (generally non-Western) "Unruly Other", the prevailing arguments against proliferation appear patronising, ethno-racist and contemptuous. Not only does non-proliferation discourse draw on Occidentalist portrayals of third world actors; it does so through the medium of gender-laden terminology. For example, the nuclear possessors' Self is responsible, prudent, rational, advanced, mature, restrained, technologically and bureaucratically competent (and thus "hegemonically masculine"). By contrast, the Unruly Others are irrational, unpredictable, emotional, uncontrolled, immature, primitive, undisciplined, incompetent, technologically backward (marks of an inferior or "subordinated" masculinity). Hence the terms of the debate are constructed to normalise and legitimate the Self/possessor states keeping weapons that the Others must be prevented from acquiring. By drawing on and evoking gendered imagery and resonances, the discourse naturalises the idea that "We" (the responsible father or sheriff) must protect, control and limit the "uncivilised", out-of control "rogue" states – for their own good, as well as for ours.

This Western proliferation discourse has had a function in the wider context of US national security politics. With the end of the "Evil Empire" of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, until the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States appeared to be without an enemy sufficiently threatening to justify maintaining its sprawling military-industrial establishment. This difficulty for the military-industrial complex was forestalled by the construction of the category of "rogue states", with governments portrayed as uncontrollable, irresponsible, irrational, malevolent, and antagonistic to Western values. Their unruliness and hostility is represented as intrinsic to their irrational nature, for to view the antagonism as politically rooted would have necessitated some soul-searching analysis into the role of Western policies and actions in contributing to disorder and breakdown in other states and regions.

The discourse of WMD proliferation has been one of the principal means of portraying certain states as major threats. To say this is neither to back away from our position opposing all weapons of mass destruction, nor to argue about the degree to which WMD in the hands of "Other" states actually do threaten the United States, local populations, regional neighbours or international security. The point is that the underlying gendered symbolism in the WMD proliferation discourse helps make it feel natural and legitimate to fight wars and spend money on military programmes such as ballistic missile defence, which would otherwise be difficult to justify on rational security grounds.

Resolution 1325: enhancing the role of women in peace and security

What do you get from being aware of the gendered meanings that are woven through WMD discourse and politics? First, ignoring it doesn't make it go away. Instead, by recognising that there is a problem, it becomes possible to confront the traditionally constructed meanings and redefine terms such as "strength" and "security" so that they more appropriately reflect the needs of all people. Highlighting the ways in which the notions of militarised security are silently underwritten and supported by an image of hegemonic masculinity enable us to see just how dangerous and illusory an image of security that produces.

Gender awareness also shows that participating in self-censorship, as the physicist in the first example did, is understandable, but very counter-productive. The effect of such self-censorship is to exclude a whole range of relevant inputs as if they did not belong in discussions of "hard" security issues because they are too "soft" (i.e. feminine).

The growing and active community working around gender, peace and security issues can very effectively multiply, amplify and deepen arguments for disarmament, which is the most effective nonproliferation approach of all, as recognised for biological and chemical weapons. Concurrently, as a consequence of the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, foreign ministries and departments of defence are having to pay more attention to gender issues.[xii] This resolution has attracted more interest than many other Security Council resolutions, forging new networks, publications, organisations, initiatives and budgets, as an active global constituency develops to further the resolution's aims and monitor implementation. By placing gender within the UN's mandate of maintaining international peace and security, UNSCR 1325 provides legitimacy for work on raising gender awareness in all aspects of security and defence.

The debate on that resolution and its follow up have brought into sharper focus the enormous contribution of women as stakeholders in peace, disarmament and conflict prevention. The role of men and a certain kind of masculinity in dominating the political structures that organise wars and oversee security matters is beginning to be questioned. The result has been a greater awareness of the gender dimensions of security issues in conflict and post-conflict situations throughout the international community. Even NATO is convening workshops on the significance of UNSCR 1325 to its work!

Dr Carol Cohn is the Director of the Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, and a Senior Research Scholar at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Her research and writing has focused on gender and international security, ranging from work on discourse of civilian defence intellectuals, gender integration issues in the US military, and, most extensively, weapons of mass destruction, including: "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals", Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, *vol. 12, no. 4 (Summer 1987), and most recently, with Sara Ruddick, "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction," in* Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives, *eds. Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee, Cambridge University Press, 2004. Her current research, supported by the Ford Foundation, examines gender mainstreaming in international peace and security institutions; a central focus is the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the on-going efforts to ensure its implementation.* **Felicity Hill** *is the Greenpeace International Political Adviser on Nuclear and Disarmament Issues. Before taking up this post Felicity was a Peace & Security Advisor to UNIFEM's Governance Peace and Security team, responsible for the Fund's work on conflict prevention, early warning and a web portal on Women, War and Peace. As the Director of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's UN Office in New York from 1997-2001 she created the Reaching Critical Will and PeaceWomen projects focused on enhancing NGO preparation and participation in security and disarmament fora.* **Sara Ruddick** *is Professor Emerita of Philosophy and Feminist Studies at Lang College of the New School for Social Research, USA. She is the author of Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace and numerous other publications on feminist studies, just war theory, and nonviolence.*

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) is the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It was passed unanimously on 31 October 2000.

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999, 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, as well as relevant statements of its President and recalling also the statement of its President, to the press on the occasion of the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace of 8 March 2000 (SC/6816),

Recalling also the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General

Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict,

Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and recognizing the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing 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 with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,

Emphasizing the need for all parties to ensure that mine clearance and mine awareness programmes take into account the special needs of women and girls,

Recognizing the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and in this regard noting the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (S/2000/693),

Recognizing also the importance of the recommendation contained in the statement of its President to the press of 8 March 2000 for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations,

Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,

Noting the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,

1. *Urges* Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

2. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

3. *Urges* the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;

4. *Further* 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;

5. *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;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures, invites Member States to incorporate these elements as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment and further requests the Secretary-General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;

7. *Urges* Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, inter alia, the United Nations Fund for Women and United Nations Children's Fund, and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant bodies;

8. *Calls* on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect

for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;

9. *Calls* upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention Security Council - 5 - Press Release SC/6942 4213th Meeting (PM) 31 October 2000 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

10. *Calls* on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;

11. *Emphasizes* the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions;

12. *Calls* upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design, and recalls its resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November 1998;

13. *Encourages* all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants;

14. *Reaffirms* its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

15. *Expresses* its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;

16. *Invites* the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;

18. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

Notes

[i] This paper is based on a presentation made by Carol Cohn and Felicity Hill to the WMD Commission in Stockholm, June 2005.

[ii] The ratio of women to men is extremely imbalanced in security and disarmament negotiations, which is increasingly considered relevant. In the ten years between 1992 and 2002, 33 women headed delegations to the review meetings of the NPT, compared to 660 men in that role. During the same period at the General Assembly First Committee on Security and Disarmament, women headed only 7% of country delegations. Out of 88 ambassadors in the Security Council between 1992 and 2005, only 4 have been women.

[iii] Women's organisations have protested nuclear weapons since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and have campaigned for cessation of nuclear testing. When women activists collected baby teeth and had them tested for levels of strontium 90, it had a strong impact on public debate on nuclear issues in the USA. Women anti-nuclear activists have successfully closed nuclear weapons bases, such as the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in the United Kingdom, and engaged in concerted efforts that forced governments to change policies or create nuclear-weapon-free zones at the municipal level throughout the world. They have also monitored and lobbied international meetings on disarmament, such as the General Assembly's three Special Sessions on Disarmament, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the First Committee of the General Assembly on Disarmament and International Security. The World Conferences on Women in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1995 all mentioned disarmament and macro security issues because of strong advocacy on the part of women's organisations making linkages between gender issues and weapons issues, with the Beijing Declaration recognising 'the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work[ing] actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support[ing] negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects'.

[iv] Scientists and researchers have found that women are more at risk of developing fatal cancer than men when exposed to the same ionising radiation exposure. Women's reproductive health is especially susceptible to the effects of radiation released from nuclear testing, as a National Cancer Institute study has documented, radioactive isotopes from nuclear testing have been found in every single county of the US. Pacific Island women who lived "downwind" from nuclear testing had high rates of still births and some babies born without bones or with other severe deformities such as transparent skin or displaced organs.

[v] Though this rugged masculine image was convincing for many voters, its obvious construction for PR purposes laid it open to being lampooned, as illustrated by a cartoonist who portrayed Bush on that occasion as suffering from "premature ejaculation."

[vi] For a more in-depth and multi-faceted development of the argument that ideas about gender have the effect of limiting and distorting the very discourses – both professional and political – that have been developed to think about WMD see Carol Cohn, 'Slick`ems, glick`ems, Christmas Trees, and Cookie Cutters: Nuclear Language and How We Learned to Pat the Bomb', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June, Volume 43., 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals', *Signs,* vol.12, No. 4, 1989, pp. 687-718, 'Wars, Wimps and Women' in Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, (1993), *Gendering War Talk*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey (from which this example is drawn).

[vii] This example comes from a meeting of civilian defence intellectuals, at which Carol Cohn was present as a participant observer.

[viii] "Bomb `em back to the Stone Age" is a phrase from Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay, whose idea of how the US should employ its nuclear weapons in the height of the Cold War did not exactly conform to the subtleties and complexities of the nuclear strategists of his time. The phrase is now commonly used, along with "make the rubble bounce," by a wide range of commentators on warfare, as a 'google' search will quickly reveal.

[ix] "We will find those who did it, we will smoke 'em out of their holes, we will get them running, and we will bring them to justice" was President George W. Bush's response to the bombing of the World Trade Centers in New York on September 11, 2001, http://www.npr.org/news/specials/tradecenter/tradecenter.html

[x] Carol Cohn and Sally Ruddick, "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction", in *Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, edited by Sohail H. Hashmi & Steven P. Lee, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[xi] This section of the paper is taken from Carol Cohn and Sara Ruddick, op. cit.

[xii] In March 2000, the Security Council conceded that 'peace was inextricably tied to equality between women and men,' (see: "Peace Inextricably Linked with Equality between Women and Men says Security Council, in International Women's Day Statement", *Security Council press release* SC/6816, 8 March 2000 http://www.un.org/ womenwatch/news/articles/chowdhuryiwd00.htm) and in October 2000 unanimously adopted Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, S/Res/1325 (2000), http:www.un.org/.

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