

Why Should we Understand Multiple Meanings of ‘Gender Security’?

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Abstract: Research concerned with language and meanings is often thought to be less useful and less policy-relevant than research utilising instrumental approaches. This article explores how a deeper understanding of the variety of meanings about ‘gender security’ in relation to Security Council Resolution 1325 can be useful to practitioners. An analysis of three initiatives related to SCR 1325 in Serbia demonstrates that different post-conflict personal-political imaginations lead to very different interpretations of ‘gender security’, shaping the subsequent policy designed to implement SCR 1325. Investigating how (potentially conflicting) ‘gender security’ policy is made is useful to practitioners as it enables us to go some way towards creating a policy that would be meaningful and significant to all stakeholders..

Keywords: Serbia, policy, gender security, post-conflict, SCR 1325

Introduction

What does ‘gender security’ mean? The concept is trickier than it might seem. For instance, to ‘gender’ something is not *necessarily* about including women, although many argue that it is. ‘Security’ is also messy: it could refer to a sense of safety in daily life, or to the protection of state borders. It is not my intention in this article to discuss or define ‘gender security’. Rather, my intention is to highlight how a deeper understanding of the variety of meanings about ‘gender security’ can be useful to practitioners. Scholarly work which has been heavily inspired by post-structuralism and a concern with language and meanings (that is, discourse) is often thought to be less useful to policy-makers, think-tanks, NGOs and other practitioners – less useful than more instrumental social science approaches. I argue that analysing some of the *ways* in which ‘gender security’ is thought about, and understanding *how* these meanings have come about, can go some way towards creating a policy that would be meaningful and significant to all stakeholders.

To make these arguments, this article will analyse debates about implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) in Serbia. SCR 1325 urges for more effective gender perspectives within peacekeeping and post-conflict processes. I analyse Serbian debates about SCR 1325 via a theoretical framework concerned with personal-political imaginations, a term I use to give a sense of temporal and spatial contingency to the feminist insight that the personal is political. Imaginations encapsulate the complexity – and boundaries – of life, experiences, knowledge and hope, highlighting how we

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