

The Construction of Women's Leadership in the Swedish Armed Forces in the Context of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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Abstract : Despite the introduction of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda in 2000, thanks to the UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, and the clear stance of the UN towards the support of increased participation of women in peace and security processes, women's leadership in this context remains very low. Considering specifically the framework of peacekeeping operations, the aim of this paper is to analyze the way women's leadership is constructed in the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). In the context of the WPS Agenda, Sweden has been chosen as a case study because of the relevance of its singular feminist policies (the statement in 2014 from Wallström, previous and current Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, that Sweden is pursuing a feminist foreign policy is a clear example). Moreover, the SAF adopted in 2016 the Handbok Gender. This policy addresses explicitly the gender perspective embraced by the Swedish military institution, a sui-generis organization even in the Scandinavian reality. Indeed, the SAF has assumed a clear commitment to represent its institution as gender aware and gender equal. The theoretical perspective utilized in this research, which focuses specifically on women, is feminism and particularly a feminist constructivist approach, with an institutional focus on the military institution, has been chosen. Taking into account the specificity of the feminist research, the above-mentioned gender policy has been examined by means of a critical discourse analysis (CDA) whose main aim is to investigate the social structures of discourse and the power relationships inherent to it. Thus, CDA appears to be quite relevant in order to understand the construction of women's leadership in the Handbok Gender. Nevertheless, even in a country which officially identifies as feminist and which is characterized by a peculiar military institution, the conclusions of this analysis revealed that women's leadership in peacekeeping operations remains very low.

Keywords : feminism, peacekeeping operations, swedish armed forces, UNSCR 1325, women's leadership, WPS agenda

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