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Women as an Emerging Actor in Peace and Security: The Impact of UNSCR 1325 in Albania

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Abstract: Implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security in practice is emerging as a priority for Albanian security politics, in which the Government of Albania is endeavouring to act by increasing compliance with the norms promoted by the Resolution. This article reflects on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 by focusing on the discourse on mainstreaming the women, peace and security norms in Albanian society. It finds that the UNSCR 1325 contributed to the increase of gender-related content in Albanian political, academic and civil society elite discourse, albeit selectively. Albanian political, academic and civil society actors appear to have been less responsive to the responsibilities of the UNSCR 1325, predictably due to the fact that Albania is not a conflict or post-conflict country, the status of which the Resolution primarily addresses. In conditions that Albania has been more responsive, the focus has been more on issues of gender equality in general rather than being guided by the specific norms of the UNSCR 1325.

Keywords: Albania, UNSCR 1325, women, peace, security, discourse

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Introduction

Adopted in 2000, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) heralded new norms and acknowledged the significance of women in the areas of peace and security. The Resolution called upon all United Nations member states to ensure an increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making levels, the expansion of the role of women in peace-keeping operations, the incorporation of a gender perspective into national defence and security policies, and training security and defence establishments on the protection of women.¹ Mainly it linked the women, peace and security agenda with conflict and post-conflict environments. In addition to the UNSCR 1325, the Security Council has passed a series of further resolutions in subsequent years.² These resolutions altogether have had a notable impact on the emergence and enhancement of norms forming the worldwide 1325 agenda on women, peace, and security.³

However, the speed and the quality of implementation of such norm-promoting documents vary from case to case. This article, as a contribution to the better understanding of the role of the UNSCR 1325 on the ground, seeks to trace how the Resolution has been perceived in the discourse of the political, academic and civil society elite, specifically in the case of Albania, and why there has been a distinct lack of political will in Albania for translating the vision of the UNSCR 1325 into reality. Namely, Albania has developed its national “Action Plan on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 of the United Nations Security Council on women, peace, and security, 2018-2020” (NAP) only in 2018,⁴ several years after the Resolution was adopted in 2000 and much later than other Western Balkan states.⁵

This delay raises a critical question relevant to Albania and to countries that are in a similar situation: Is there a specific aspect of the UNSCR 1325 that has made the national security actors reluctant to internalise the women, peace, and security norms? The principal reason that we have focused on this question is to see specifically how the Resolution has been realised in Albania, given that Albania is not a post-conflict country. We concentrate on this particular element because the Resolution itself primarily addresses the needs, conditions, rights and measures related to women and girls in situations of armed conflicts. We expect that the greater the number of armed conflicts or post-conflict situations that appear on the radar, the more likely it will be that Albania will adopt a security policy

1 United Nations Security Council 2000.

2 In essence, the UNSCR 1325 advanced norms of gender equality formally entrenched in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a result, it linked gender with security politics.

3 Krefit 2017.

4 Council of Ministers 2018.

5 Hoewer (2013) mentions that, for example, the NAPs were adopted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in 2010, Croatia in 2011, and North Macedonia in 2013.

more in line with the UNSCR 1325. The armed conflict or post-conflict situations are critical in this regard, given the immense attention afforded to them in the UNSCR 1325 as well as in related resolutions and in the initiatives undertaken for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 around the world. Armed conflict is an important gender issue, where patterns of male-dominated fighting and the marginalisation of women frequently occur. The focus of the UNSCR 1325 on armed conflicts or post-conflict situations, as well as in related resolutions, may thus distract the countries from absorbing and implementing the tenets of the UNSCR 1325.⁶

While there have been studies of how the UNSCR 1325 has played out in different countries,⁷ only a few systematic studies focus on the discourse surrounding the UNSCR 1325.⁸ There is also a gap in the studies that analyse how the UNSCR 1325 has been understood in a country, such as Albania, that has not been in a conflict or post-conflict situation. From this discussion emerges the two propositions of this article: (P1): “UNSCR 1325 has had a positive impact on the mainstreaming gender in the political, academic and civil society security and gender equality discourse in Albania”; (P2): “Internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms is less likely in Albania as it is not an armed conflict or post-conflict country.”

Contributing to the empirical literature on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, this article looks to tackle and answer the following research questions: How has the Resolution transformed the security and defence institutions in Albania? Has the UNSCR 1325 affected the content of the discourse in Albania by giving higher reference to issues related to women, peace and security? What aspects of women, peace and security do the Albanian political, academic and civil society elite mainstream? Has the inexistence of an armed conflict in Albania’s recent history made the mainstreaming of the 1325 agenda less likely?

The case of Albania is important in two main aspects. First, Albania is a Southeast European country with a population of approximately three million people, of which women comprise 50%, and they take a very active role in society. The women of Albania are poised to make contributions to peace and security. Secondly, while the women and security issues have attracted substantial attention in conflict or post-conflict countries, women, as they relate to security, has not emerged as a prominent issue in Albania as it is not a conflict or post-conflict country. It is notable, however, that there has been some attention paid to domestic violence. It is an important case for understanding whether the lack of or presence of conflictual past matters when it comes to the mainstreaming of women, peace, and security norms in security policies.

6 Barrow 2010; Arostegui 2013; Cohn and Duncanson 2020; George 2016; Hudson 2005; Madsen 2019; O’Sullivan 2019; McLeod 2011; Björkdahl and Selimovic 2015; Singh 2020.

7 Ellereby 2013; Anderlini 2011; Binder *et al.* 2008; Hudson 2005; Tryggstad 2009.

8 Anderlini 2011; Ellerby 2013.

The paper proceeds as follows. After outlining the theoretical framework and methodology, the article reviews the impact of the UNSCR 1325 on Albania's official security governance discourse. The analysis presented here also involves a review of the strategic documents that comprise Albanian security and defence policy. The study then looks to identify the discourses on women and security and how this discourse has been affected by the UNSCR 1325. The information gathered provided the basis for coding as described above. The final section concludes with a note on the contribution this article makes to the empirical literature on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325.

Theoretical Framework

Normative change – as envisaged with internationally binding documents – does not occur immediately. According to the literature, the norm-like cycle includes three phases, namely emergence, cascade and internalisation phases.⁹ The cycle begins with the formulation of a new norm(s); the cycle continues with compliance to the new norm by the states, for example the development of a national action plan; and ends with the internalisation of the new norm (for example an increased role for women in decision making and in peace-keeping operations, as we demonstrate in this paper).¹⁰

The absence of the political will to mainstream and internalise the norms, such as those from the UNSCR 1325, has not been limited to the political establishment. The highly confidential nature, the culture and dynamics of policymaking within the police and the army, the main actors comprising the security and defence sector, provides the security sector with numerous points of possible resistance to gender mainstreaming. The security and defence sector has its own organisational culture and dynamics and has a tendency to respond late or remain unresponsive to new developments and instead be preoccupied with its own classified and confidential environment.¹¹ Scholars have pointed to the various ways in which security and defence institutions establish social hierarchies around gender, espousing male-dominated procedures.¹² The assumed anti-gender equality bias in the security and defence sector of many countries, including post-socialist, can be understood in this light.

In her research Melanie Hoewer¹³ finds that the national action plans of the developed world have been oriented to countries experiencing conflict rather than to their own domestic environments. The heavy focus on hard security, armed or violent conflict and post-conflict environments risks resistance to the UNSCR 1325 norm diffusion in countries that have not undergone long lasting armed conflict in their post-Cold War history,

9 Kreft 2017; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Jusufi 2019.

12 Hudson 2005; Wright 2016; Jenichen, Joachim, and Schneiker 2018; Jenne and Bisshopp 2021.

13 Hoewer 2013.

resulting in a halting of internalisation of the norms articulated in the UNSCR 1325. The case of Albania, as we argue in this paper, is a case in point.

Methodology

Besides looking at the impact of the UNSCR 1325 on the transformation of security and defence institutions, this article employs discourse analysis methodology to examine how the political, academic and civil society elite in Albania perceive this specific Resolution. We argue that a closer look at the content of the discourse of the national political, academic and civil society elite is important for various reasons. First, the discourse and its content is a road map for a country's subsequent efforts and practices. It is often the first step before action is taken in which the states set forth the objectives for their policies. Second, the discourse lays out the related stakeholders in a country, identifying the actors in the field. Third, often half of the work done in a policy field is delivered at the level of discourse. Fourth, formal discourse and its content arguably is a prerequisite for mainstreaming women, peace, and security norms. In this light, while other research into the discourses of the UNSCR 1325 has identified categories of "protection, participation, prevention, peacekeeping"¹⁴ and "representation, incorporation, protection, recognition,"¹⁵ this article attempts to identify the meaning given to security with reference to women and peace and to the UNSCR 1325 specifically among the political, academic and civil society elite in Albania.

To identify whether and how the UNSCR 1325 has transformed or influenced changes in political, academic and civil society discourse content related to gender equality and security, this article will assess the concept of women, peace, and security in the following three fields: official national security governance, domestic political discourse, and academic publishing. Specifically for the latter, this article makes a broader assessment of the Albanian scholars' publications in national and international journals and publishing in general. The goal is to identify the existence of major arguments and findings on the subject of women, peace, and security in Albanian publications.

The discourses as reflected in the three categories, namely national security governance, statements made by policymakers, and academic publishing from 2000 to 2021, by borrowing the scheme employed by Kreft,¹⁶ are coded on an ordinal scale according to the extent of focus on the UNSCR 1325 norms. In coding the Albanian discourse, we scanned these three categories of discourses for references such as "women", "peace", "security", "gender", and "UNSCR 1325". When references to these occurred, we proceeded to a second step to evaluate how comprehensive such commitments are in relation to the UNSCR 1325.

14 Anderlini 2011.

15 Ellerby 2013.

16 Kreft 2017.

The coding scheme employed to record the extent of the UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming in each text category is as follows:

- Coding of 0 – No reference to the UNSCR 1325 norms or to women and security. Discourses here make no mention of the UNSCR 1325 standards or women and security whatsoever.
- Coding of 1 – Discourses in this category make reference to aspects related to women and security, but no specific reference to the UNSCR 1325. They may include very general dimensions of women and security.
- Coding of 2 – Partial the UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming, restricted to a few areas. Discourses falling in this category are characterised by partial mainstreaming of women and security themes in general and partial direct reference to the UNSCR 1325.
- Coding of 3 – Full the UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming across nearly all areas. Discourses in this category are characterised by mainstreaming extending to nearly all areas of the UNSCR 1325 and with a higher degree of specificity.

The coding results are provided towards the end of the paper, following the review of the discourse content and developments identified in the Albanian context.

This method, with a focus on different sources, serves to generate previously unexplored findings on the Albanian political, academic and civil society elite understanding of the UNSCR 1325 and lay the basis for Albanian conception and scholarship of the UNSCR 1325. This article was developed on the basis of the review of the available official documentation, media reports, and 12 academic publications. In addition, the authors of this study were fortunate to be able to closely follow the developments in the field while residing in Tirana. This provided the opportunity for the authors to triangulate the results of the desk research through consultation with the Albanian national authorities and civil society representatives in the form of some eleven semi-structured interviews conducted in Tirana since 2011.

This article assumes that women, peace, and security content in the discourse of the Albanian political, academic and civil society elite has increased since the adoption of the UNSCR 1325, but the application of its tenets has been selective and the country has shown resistance to the internalisation of its norms. Specifically, it posits that when armed conflict has not been part of recent national history, internalisation of the women, peace, and security norms is less likely and national actors are less responsive.

Review of the Impact of the UNSCR 1325 on Albania's Security Governance

When the UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2000, Albania had completed the first generation of security and defence reforms. It included the establishment of new security and defence institutions, structures, and chains of responsibility. The first major transformation of the security and defence strategy was the democratisation and professionalisation of the security sector. The country also instituted basic principles and structures for the oversight and civilian control of the security and defence sector, empowered the parliament to oversee and approve the sector's budgets and made attempts for the civilianisation of security and defence sector bureaucracies. Civilianisation consisted of staffing security ministries with civilians, including women, who would design and implement security policies.¹⁷ In this way, Albania made progress in reforming its security sector, including the police, army, intelligence, and other security institutions, in making the security sector better able to meet its contemporary obligations and merge them into the overall national democratisation agenda. This progress culminated with the full membership of Albania in NATO in 2009.

The status and position of women in Albania have been a development challenge for many years.¹⁸ However, the country has made substantial progress in setting standards and passing laws to promote equality between men and women.¹⁹ Most notably, a greater level of equality was achieved in 2019 with the enforcement of new and specific policies and legislation related to the national armed forces. Data retrieved from the UNDP gender inequality index show that Albania notes a 50% improvement in scores from 0.334 in 2000 to 0.181 in 2019, ranking the country 69th in the world.²⁰

Albania has taken on many new security obligations and has actively participated in international peace support operations²¹ such as in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Chad, Georgia, the Ivory Coast, Kosovo and South Sudan, but with limited institutional attention paid to the role of women in these operations. Nevertheless, the adaptation of the standards set by the UNSCR 1325 to the national level through the development and adoption of a specific national action plan in 2018, has brought Albania's security actors closer to international norms in regards to women and security. In this way, a key element of the UNSCR 1325 in Albania has been to open the political space for reforms and increase the level of professionalism in the security sector through re-defining missions, tasks, and structures for the security sector actors in line with the contributions that women can offer. It is estimated that a 2% increase from 2011

17 Gjevori 2015.

18 Danaj 2018.

19 Ramadani 2015.

20 UNDP 2019.

21 Gjevori and Visoka 2016.

to 2019 in the participation of women in the Albanian Armed Forces was achieved, as illustrated by Figure 1.

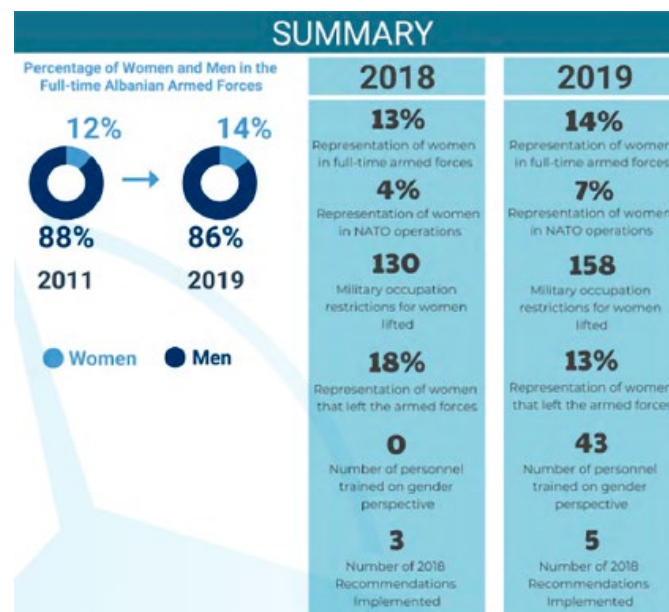


Figure 1: Percentage of women in Albanian Armed Forces. Source: NATO 2021

When considering the impact of the UNSCR 1325 on Albania's security governance, it is important to review how the reforms undertaken in security governance have related to specific norms embedded within the UNSCR 1325: the gender mainstreaming of security strategies, laws and policies, the representation of women in decision-making in the security sector, the contributions of women to peace building, the representation of women in international peacekeeping operations, capacity building on human and women's rights, and combating violence against women. For each specific development or reform, a coding category for reference to UNSCR 1325 norms is considered after a review of the related developments.

UNSCR 1325 Impact on Gender Mainstreaming in Strategies, Policies, and Laws

Advancing gender equality has been a core value of Albania's constitutional system and is viewed as a cross-cutting issue throughout policy planning circles. The Constitution prohibits gender discrimination and provides for equality before the law. The primary regulatory framework for the role of women in society is, to a great extent, set within the 2008 Law on Gender Equality in Society.²² In addition, the 2010 Law for Protection from Discrimination²³ and the 2006 Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations²⁴

22 Kuvendi i Republikës së Shqipërisë 2008.

23 Kuvendi i Republikës së Shqipërisë 2010.

24 Kuvendi i Republikës së Shqipërisë 2006.

have significantly improved the legislative basis for gender equality, but have paid limited attention to security aspects of gender equality.

Albania's authorities have made important progress in developing a strategic framework for gender equality. There has been substantial progress in mainstreaming gender under the umbrella development strategy *Strategjia Kombëtare për Zhvillim dhe Integrim 2015 – 2020* [National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015 – 2020].²⁵ For example, a medium-term cross-sectoral gender equality strategy, *Strategjia Kombëtare për Barazim Gjinor dhe Plani i Veprimit 2016 – 2020* [National Strategy for Gender Equality and Action Plan 2016–2020]²⁶ became part of the national strategic framework along with other sectoral strategies covering various areas of economic, social, political, and cultural development of the country. *Plani i Veprimit për Zbatimin e Rezolutës 1325 të Këshillit të Sigurimit të Kombeve të Bashkuara mbi Gruan, Paqen dhe Sigurinë 2018 – 2020* [Action Plan on Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2018 – 2020] or NAP, adopted in 2018,²⁷ falls under this framework, as well.

Following the adoption of national action plans in various countries around the world as a form of implementation of the UNSCR 1325, and also required by the Resolution itself, there was growing interest in Albania to address issues concerning women, peace, and security, with the government and civil society gradually recognising the need to develop a specific action plan that would work to mainstream the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in Albanian national security governance. As a matter of fact, women becoming integrated into the security forces began primarily as a result of deep reforms made by the Albanian government for the purpose of transforming the structure of the armed forces so that the country would be ready to join NATO. Afterwards, in 2016, the UNSCR 1325 became a key agenda item adopted by the NATO committee on gender perspectives that demanded the integration of gender perspectives in the armed forces of NATO member nations and in its partner nations. In this regard, while the afore-mentioned strategies make general references to women and security, the UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming remains absent in the national strategies of Albania, with the exception of the NAP. For example, the 2021 National Strategy on Gender Equality makes no reference to the UNSCR 1325. Again, the Law on protection from discrimination makes no reference to the UNSCR 1325.

In the security sector in Albania, the national strategic framework consists of the Defence Directive of 2021, Defence Strategy of 2019, National Security Strategy of 2014, Military Strategy of 2015, and Inter-Sectoral Strategy for Community Security 2021 – 2026. However, the UNSCR 1325 is not mentioned in any of these security and defence strategies. Thus, the political will to make women's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the country's security laws,

25 Këshilli i Ministrave i Republikës së Shqipërisë 2016.

26 Ministria e Mirëqenies Sociale dhe Rinisë 2016.

27 Këshilli i Ministrave i Republikës së Shqipërisë 2018.

strategies, and policies has largely been absent. The security policy actors and policymakers have been engaged in the mainstreaming of women, peace, and security agenda on an ad hoc basis, primarily in response to international pressures arising from membership in organisations such as NATO or from specific initiatives undertaken by other international actors as regards gender mainstreaming in the security sector.

Linking the UNSCR 1325 standards with conflict or post-conflict situations further risks diluting the importance of the Resolution to countries such as Albania that have not experienced an armed conflict. In this sense, the UNSCR1325 agenda has prioritised the transfer of women, peace, and security norms in conflict or post-conflict countries. Specifically, it linked the women, peace, and security agenda with conflict or post-conflict environments as it did when it was adopted in 2000, at a time when there were multiple instances of civil conflicts around the world and when the international community was active in responding to these conflicts with different peace-keeping and peace-making tools. The international practice of focusing on mainly U.N. peacekeeping operations²⁸ or peace agreements²⁹ as the primary means for implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and the commensurate attention of the literature to the lethal aspects of the UNSCR 1325, are sources of contestation to the diffusion of the UNSCR 1325 norms in non-conflict environments as has been the case in Albania. While in the case of Albania the most recent situation that came closest to being labelled as ‘armed conflict’ was the brief 1997 civil unrest which was caused by the collapse of informal market economic institutions and while the UNSCR 1325 has contributed to the shift in understanding that security includes economic security as an important factor for the position of women in society, the Albanian NAP does not refer at all to the protracted economic instability which has had direct negative repercussions on the lives of women.

In fact, there have been government-wide mechanisms established to promote gender equality in Albania. The Ministry of Social Security and Youth is the leading authority in this area. The Ministry is the key institution in the country to lead and promote government-wide gender equality mechanisms. It carries out this function with the assistance of its internal specialised structure on gender equality. It has been successful in providing policy infrastructure for all interested stakeholders to construct, produce, and manage overarching gender equality and empowerment issues, including in the security sector. As a result, gender equality today enjoys some recognition in Albania as being an important issue, including in the area of security and defence. The duty to propose policies on gender equality rests with the National Council of Gender Equality. This Council has an obligation to the Government to set the direction for state policies on gender equality. Gender Staff or a network of gender equality employees that should exist in every line ministry and in the local governing bodies is another part of the gender equality institutional mechanism in Albania. In the security sector, the Ministries of Defence and of the

28 Kreft 2017.

29 Ellerby 2013.

Interior have institutionalised the position of full-time Gender Staff, while the Ministry of Interior also has a gender focal point and diversity officer.

The capacity to develop and implement sound public policy based on solid governance principles has been advancing in Albania, both at the national and local levels. Nevertheless, capacity problems with regard to laws, strategies, and policies have manifested themselves in a number of ways as evidenced by the inadequate human resource capacity and financial constraints; the absence of improved horizontal and inter-agency coordination on women and security; and limited expertise on women and security.³⁰

Representation of Women in Decision-Making

At the political level, the national legislation, including the Law on Gender Equality in the Society, and the Electoral Code have instituted a quota whereby a minimum of 30% of the candidates participating in elections must be women. The introduction of this quota has ensured a strengthened balance of participation of women in the legislature. This has led to notable achievements at the national level where the number of women serving as MPs has doubled. In the recent general elections (2017 and 2021), although the major parties followed the letter of the law by nominating female candidates at a rate of 30%, in many cases its spirit was not respected as they were subsequently relegated to unelectable positions. Despite these shortcomings, the quota principle has led to an increase in the number of women in Parliament, where currently women make up 36 of 140 (25.7%) of its members elected in 2021, an increase from 6.4% in 1992. In addition, 35% of local councilors, nine out of 61 mayors, and 12 out of 17 cabinet ministers are women, and perhaps most notably the speaker of the Parliament is a woman. However, such improvements still fall short of the desired equality representation serving in elected positions. Nevertheless, the panorama at the lower levels of decision-making looks significantly better in terms of gender equality in Albania. In the public administration of line ministries, it is estimated that more than 65% of professional positions are held by women.

Specifically in the security sector, including the police and the army, although the overall number of women within the ranks of the police and the army has increased, the actual percentage of women participating in the security sector, as well as their rate in high-ranking positions, remains low. Nevertheless, from 2018 to 2019 it is estimated that the percentage of women in the armed forces increased from 13% to 14%. Since 2018, the Albanian Armed Forces lifted restrictions on an estimated 158 military occupations. As a result, the number of women participating in the army increased to 14%, an 8% increase in one year, surpassing the NATO average of 12%.³¹ The procedures for promotions are formally the same for both genders in the military and are based on seniority and pro-

30 Arqimandriti 2017; Çela 2017; Meshi 2017; Benussi 2011; Dervishaj 2011; Gjurgji 2011; Hroni 2011; Sheshi 2017; Qesaraku 2011; Rrumbullaku 2011; Toska 2011; Zoto 2011.

31 NATO 2021.

fessional qualifications mandated according to the Law on Grades and Careers in the Armed Forces. Despite the fact that women are allowed to serve in all career fields within the military, they continue to occupy more logistical and supportive positions such as in administration and human resources. According to the latest figures, in 2019 women had the highest occupational representation in health care (68%) followed by logistics (33%) and the personnel section (25%). However, no occupational representation is seen in the armour, artillery, legal, marine systems engineering and aviation in which men continue to hold 100% of the positions. Women holding ranks at the officer level is at 20%, with an annual increase of 1%. In addition, the representation of women engaged in NATO operations increased by 75% (from 4% to 7%) from 2018 to 2019.³²

The recruitment procedures have not been particularly clear and transparent. Job descriptions are not widely published, therefore there is a lack of information regarding job functions and responsibilities. The absence of published job descriptions negatively impacted the motivation of women to become part of and pursue career prospects in the security sector. A lack of information describing functions they would be expected to perform has prevented women from taking part in recruitment procedures and efforts required for promotion. The inclusion of women in the higher echelons of the Army, the Ministry of Defence and in peace-keeping operations in which Albania has taken part has shown progress, but it has been comparatively low.

Representation of women in the Police is at 9.55% and 6% hold ranking positions in the police.³³ The Police have drafted action plans aimed at implementing gender equality throughout the police force. It has also developed a Declaration on Diversity in the Police that is displayed in all police offices. It has engaged in women-only recruitment campaigns and has appointed diversity and gender officers. However, barriers remain that inhibit further mainstreaming of gender equality in the policing structures. These barriers, among others, include gaps in awareness and the absence of incentives for the empowerment of women, among others. Interviews conducted with national institutions have shown that they are quite open and ready to welcome women into the police and armed forces. Research results conducted to date claim that despite the increase in the number of women and girls in institutions, they are still failing to change the situation for thousands of other women who continue to live in extremely difficult conditions of poverty, unemployment and domestic violence.³⁴

32 NATO 2021.

33 UN WOMEN 2016.

34 OSCE 2020.

Contribution to Peace Processes in the Country

Albania's civic cohesion remains fragile, and tensions between various layers of the society persist. The conservative nature of macro-level politics in Albania, where the politics has sharply divided the society between the right and the left camps and between the northern and the southern regions of the country, and the politics which is dominated by male voices, have had their impact. They have posed a challenge to the inclusion of women and in the transformation of initiatives arising from women's activism into reality. Within this political setting, high political concerns take priority over agendas such as that of the UNSCR 1325 in everyday Albanian politics. Hence, the activism over the UNSCR 1325 norms is limited by the legacy of the absence of past armed conflicts and male-dominated political processes, although if allowed, as argued by Melanie Hoewer, the UNSCR 1325 has the ability to establish a space that can allow for the bridging of boundaries between women from different political backgrounds and between civil society and grass-roots activists.³⁵

Thus, women have a key role to play in democratic public life and in alleviating sources that threaten the country's national and civic cohesiveness. Aware of this, the country has been provided with access to increased aid funds that have targeted the role of women in the peace processes in the country. Development support by Albania's partner countries and institutions has led to numerous initiatives that further the role of women in the country and their contribution to peace and security. For example, UN Women has been one of the primary contributors to gender mainstreaming at the local level. There have been initiatives that provided support to state and non-state actors to engage jointly in gender-sensitive processes. Moreover, there has been a support for existing and potential female leaders to improve and develop their leadership skills. There have also been programs aimed at strengthening local responses to violence against women, including opening shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence. These initiatives resulted in a positive approach toward improving the position of women in the wider socio-economic and political environment. These initiatives have also stimulated wider thinking for the introduction of measures that would enhance the role of women in maintaining peace and security. As a result, women have been the main actors in framing the discourse on this issue.³⁶

These initiatives have mainly been driven by the civil society of Albania where there are more than a thousand registered NGOs, a number of which are headed by women. This means that in this sector, women have found greater space and freedom to engage. Interest groups and organisations that work in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment make up an important group in Albania's civil society. In this context, the UNSCR 1325 NAP, developed with broad support from relevant stakeholders, includ-

³⁵ Hoewer 2013.

³⁶ Arqimandriti 2017; Çela 2017; Meshi 2017; Benussi 2011; Dervishaj 2011; Gjurgji 2011; Hroni 2011; Sheshi 2017; Qesaraku 2011; Rrumbullaku 2011; Toska 2011; Zoto 2011.

ing the civil society, has served to stimulate the development of security policies that are supported by both the government and civil society and can provide some basis for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in the medium-term.

Representation of Women in International Peace-Keeping Processes

Albania had gradually achieved membership in various international and regional security initiatives that aim for the maintenance of international peace and order including the UN, NATO, the OSCE, the Adriatic Charter, Regional Cooperation Council, the South-east European Defence Ministerial, and the European Security and Defence Policy. The representation of women in these initiatives and mechanisms, such as peacekeeping missions, helps to fulfil the mandate of the missions to sensitively deal with women affected by a conflict. In addition, it also stimulates the view of women as agents of peace rather than solely as victims of violence.

However, the representation of Albanian women in the peacekeeping missions has been moderately low. As a member of NATO since 2009, Albania has designated five women to various NATO structures. Since 2008, only twelve women have been engaged in external UN and NATO missions; seven were posted to Afghanistan as part of medical teams (a doctor, a nurse, and a psychologist) and human resource teams. Currently, only two Albanian women serve in the UN mission in South Sudan.³⁷ In terms of participation in combat operations abroad, no women have been committed to date.

Training on Gender Mainstreaming

Training and education in Albania are areas that have recorded solid progress in terms of increased access by women. Public education has sought to institutionalise gender equality as part of curricula at the pre-university and university levels. However, successes in general education have not been replicated in the security sector. This has contributed to gender inequality within public service in terms of security education for women and career advancement in the security and defence sector. Also, the link between training and career development of women across police and army services remains weak.³⁸

Nevertheless, with the growing work on the UNSCR 1325 in Albania, there has been an informal community of professionals emerging, within and outside the government, with expertise in both security and gender issues. Capacity building initiatives were implemented in order to further develop the skills and expertise in the field of security and gender. As a result of investments made in the professionalisation of the public administration as well as in the training of personnel in related governmental ministries, Albania

³⁷ United Nations 2021.

³⁸ Arqimandriti 2017; Çela 2017; Meshi 2017; Benussi 2011; Dervishaj 2011; Gjurgji 2011; Hroni 2011; Sheshi 2017; Qesaraku 2011; Rrumbullaku 2011; Toska 2011; Zoto 2011.

succeeded in advancing the capacity of its security and gender equality in sectors that embraced the importance of the UNSCR 1325. They were able to assist in designing the NAP and move its implementation forward. Albania could also count on many competent representatives of civil society, including the media, to discuss and offer support for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325.³⁹

Tackling Impunity with Regard to Gender-Based Violence

Gender violence, including the trafficking of women, is a persistent phenomenon that affects large numbers of women in Albania. While a legislative framework protecting women from gender-based violence and trafficking has been developed, gaps in implementation have weakened its effectiveness in combating impunity for perpetrators. The Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations aims to eliminate all forms of domestic violence and to protect the victims of family violence. It regulates a network of authorities that deal with domestic violence and provides protection measures for victims, for example through the provision of protection orders issued by courts. An increase in reported cases of domestic violence following the introduction of this new law attests to the fact that family violence continues to affect many families in Albania. Still, the problem of under-reporting persists, particularly in rural areas. In addition, Albania's women continue to be trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.⁴⁰

There have been legal measures to prevent gender violence in the security sector, as well. Based on Law 173/2014 "On the discipline in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania" it has been undertaken "measures to prevent acts of sexual harassment, including the definition of sexual harassment committed by the military during or outside working hours, as a serious disciplinary offense."⁴¹ In addition, with the initiative and support of UN Women and UNDP, the General Director of State Police "approved a document against harassment and sexual harassment in the State Police, which was followed by several capacity-building activities."⁴²

Albanian Political and Civil Society Discourse on Women, Peace, and Security

Although the Resolution was issued in 2000, 18 years passed before Albanian policymakers and decision-makers took a role in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, likely due to the fact that the country was not challenged by traditional wars or enduring identity conflicts. However, Albania's integration into larger regional security initiatives, such as

39 Arqimandriti 2017; Çela 2017; Meshi 2017; Benussi 2011; Dervishaj 2011; Gjurgji 2011; Hroni 2011; Sheshi 2017; Qesaraku 2011; Rrumbullaku 2011; Toska 2011; Zoto 2011.

40 *Ibid.*

41 MSHP 2019, 30.

42 *Ibid.*

NATO as of 2009, brought with it the need to share new and important security-related roles and responsibilities even beyond its borders.

It is essential to state that the Albanian political discourse has been equally shared among the political, academic and civil society elite. For example, the stimulus to draft the NAP for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 came from the civil society that formed the Woman, Peace, Security Coalition, composed of 32 organisations. Ines Leskaj, one of the leaders of the coalition and the executive director of the Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), stated the following: “I think that the civil society along with other actors had an important and decisive role in drafting the Action Plan. It will continue to play the same role in terms of implementing and in particular monitoring of the plan.”⁴³

The former Minister of Defence and current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Olta Xhaçka, stated that “increasing the participation of women in the security sector is an added value to women’s and girls’ rights agenda in the overall Albanian society.”⁴⁴ In her speech, Albania’s former deputy prime minister Senida Mesi, would specifically target the NAP and state that “the adoption of the National Action Plan, above all, is important for women and girls in Albania to overcome traditional roles and to engage more in security and peace issues. In recent years, more women and girls started to enrol in the Albanian State Police and the Armed Forces and for the first time we have a female General...”⁴⁵

However, the discourse surrounding the security of women among the Albanian elite is that it must not be limited only to female participation and representation in armed or police forces. The protection against domestic violence and gender-based violence is often referred to as a serious challenge ahead. Local NGOs, in collaboration with international institutions such as UN Women and the Council of Europe, have organised awareness-raising campaigns on a regular basis tackling the right of women to speak and denounce cases of violence, the lack of state capacities to rehabilitate victims of violence, as well as aspects of cultural violence. National experts reiterated the need to have an inclusive approach for women in society, for a safe place for women and girls who are escaping domestic violence to shelter, and prevention of women becoming victims of trafficking. While sex and labour trafficking are prohibited by Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the Criminal Code of Albania,⁴⁶ several cultural forms such as false promises of marriage, employment, education, or a better life seem to act as attractive incentives that lead women and girls to fall into the trap of trafficking. “Women victims of domestic violence, fail to enjoy social protection programs precisely because one of the conditions to benefit from these services is to have a job and a minimum wage, which victims of violence do not always manage to have,” stated Rezarta Agolli, Leader of Gender, Peace and Security associa-

43 UN Women – Albania 2018.

44 Report TV 2020.

45 UN Women – Albania 2018.

46 Assembly of the Republic of Albania 1995, Article 110(a), p. 57; Article 128 (b), p. 65.

tion.⁴⁷ Along the same lines, a statement made by the Minister of Health Ogerta Manastirliu reads, “the development of democracy and the provision of peace cannot be achieved without the involvement, commitment, and joint work of men and women.”⁴⁸

Thus, the elite and academic discourse indicates that women’s security cannot be limited to police structures and armed forces, but it is highly a matter of economic and social structural opportunities. Nevertheless, the emphasis has been placed on the UNSCR 1325 norms as the “best measures to tackle gender-based discrimination and empower women in decision-making, local governments, the army and police force,” according to Bajana Cevoli from the Association for Women’s Security and Peace in Albania.⁴⁹

Considering the discourses referred to above, the Albanian discourse of women, peace, and security contains dilemmas between the local need to contextualise the UNSCR 1325 agenda and Albania’s domestic and international obligations. As also seen in the case of the NAP, it to a large extent perpetuates the status quo and does not provide a platform for the genuine integration of women that would enable greater transformation in the security and defence sector. There are several structural issues that influence women’s security such as the patriarchal culture, fear, polarisation, and social fragmentation. Thus, the discourse in Albania reflects the need to approach women, peace, and security beyond protection, representation, and participation, and suggests a perspective of women as a means for security transformation.

Albanian Academic Interest in Women, Peace, and Security

This section evaluates the place that the concept of ‘women, peace, and security’, or the UNSCR 1325, finds in the Albanian academic publishing. The assessment is based on publications by Albanian scholars in national and international journals and publishing in general. The aim is to identify the existence of the tendency of Albanian publications on ‘women, peace and security’ to focus on the topics, methodological approaches, major arguments, and findings of the publications. As stated by Danaj *et al.*, “there is no academic journal on feminist or gender studies in Albania and there are few published academic papers or researches.”⁵⁰ Even though there are some articles written in Albanian, most of the publications are written in English. They focus primarily on the dichotomy of women as a referent object in human security and the problems of gender inequality and domestic violence in Albania, highlighting the latter. There are a limited number of publications that elaborate on the role of Albanian women in the security sector.

47 Citizens Channel 2020.

48 Ministry of Defence 2020.

49 UN Women – Albania 2018.

50 Danaj *et al.* 2019, 5.

As shown in Table 1, the selected publications include nine articles from eight different journals and three research reports. Ten of the publications were written in English and two in Albanian. Half of the journals analysed are indexed in Clarivate Analytics and Scopus, and the remainder are peer-reviewed journals of which one is a national journal with publications in the Albanian language.

	Title	Author	Year	Publication	Type of Publication	Language
1	Sfidat e diversitetit gjinor mbi policinë e shtetit	Elona Dhembo	2010	Research Report – Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Albania	Research Report	Albanian
2	Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Through Education: The Case of Albanian Police Academy Curriculum	Elona Dhembo	2011	Western Balkans Security Observer (Journal of Regional Security since 2012)	Research Article in Scopus indexed Journal	English
3	Albania, in “Women, Peace and Security in The Western Balkans: Independent review of translation of UNSCR 1325 into policy in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia”	Elona Dhembo	2013	Project Report – Belgrade Centre for Security Policy	Research Report	English
4	Përkatësia gjinore dhe çështjet e sigurisë	Elona Dhembo	2013	Çështje Europiane dhe të sigurisë (European and Security Affairs)	Research Article in a Peer-Reviewed National Journal	Albanian
5	The Power of Women in the Armed Forces	Valbona Medani	2013	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	Research Article in a Scopus indexed Journal until 2016	English
6	Gender Policy and European Integration	Rediana Bajrami, Eneida Capo	2013	Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	Research Article in a Scopus indexed Journal until 2016	English
7	Representativeness of Women and Minorities in Albanian Security Sector in Monitoring and Evaluation of the Security Governance in Albania	Elona Dhembo	2014	Project Report – Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Albania	Project Report	English
8	Violence Against Women in Albanian Society	Arsen Kllogjri	2017	European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research	Research Article in Peer Reviewed Journal	English

9	Gender and feminist studies in Albania – A brief state of the art	Ermira Danaj, Edvin Lame & Daniela Kalaja	2019	Gender, Place and Culture	Research Article in Clarivate Analytics & SSCI indexed Journal	English
10	Non-Profit Organizations on the Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights: Albanian Case	Evis Garunja	2019	European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences	Research Article in Clarivate Analytics & ISI indexed Journal	English
11	Workplace Violence and Harassment against Women in Transition Countries: The Case of Albania	Darina Çoni (Kacollja)	2020	Journal of International Cooperation and Development	Research Article in Peer Reviewed Journal	English
12	Role of Women in Preventing Radicalization and Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism in Albania	Merita Poni, Evisa Kambellari, Merushe Zeneli, Rozana Baci	2021	Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies	Research Article in Scopus indexed Journal	English

Table 1: Reference to women and security found in Albanian scholars' publications. Source: Clarivate Analytics, Scopus and other indexed journals

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in general appear to be the trending perspective in the publications of Albanian scholars, particularly in regard to the role and position of women in Albanian society. Inequality is mainly treated in terms of the discrimination of women and women's rights abuse in social, economic, and political life. Bajrami and Capo closely consider "gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality and the fight against domestic violence."⁵¹ They focus on the improvement of the legal framework of equal opportunities and the policies and mechanisms to deal with problems of inequality and domestic violence. Kllogjri defines domestic abuse as "a complex phenomenon, and includes various forms of verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and economic" abuse.⁵² Similarly, Çoni identifies the presence of physical, sexual, and psychological workplace violence against women in Albania.⁵³ Kllogjri and Çoni bring attention to the lack of support and trust in state institutions and social prejudice as important factors that prevent abused women from denouncing domestic violence.⁵⁴ Çoni adds that the fear of contract termination as another factor which prevents women from publicly denouncing cases of workplace violence.⁵⁵ Garunja appreciates the efforts of civil society in the promotion and protection of women in Albania, but calls for even more activism in order to bring attention to their issues.⁵⁶ It is important to emphasise the position held

51 Bajrami and Capo 2013, 141.

52 Kllogjri 2017, 94.

53 Çoni 2020.

54 Kllogjri 2017; Çoni 2020.

55 Çoni 2020.

56 Garunja 2019.

by scholars that the achievements regarding women's rights and their protection from violence requires coordination and cooperation among local, national, public, and non-governmental actors and professionals.⁵⁷

Publications by Danaj *et al.* and Dhembo highlight the role of the education system on gender mainstreaming.⁵⁸ Danaj *et al.* through a comprehensive description bring attention to the marginal position of gender and feminist studies in the Albanian higher education system that feeds the brains of the upcoming generations.⁵⁹ Dhembo, through an analysis of the Albanian police academy curriculum (2009 – 2010 academic year), endeavoured to understand the state of gender mainstreaming in security sector education programmes in Albania. The findings point out that the language and content of the programmes is not sensitive enough to gender differences and is influenced by traditional gender stereotypes and roles.⁶⁰ As such, she calls for “further steps to improve such curricula so as to mainstream gender and make them gender sensitive,”⁶¹ as an important way to promote gender equality in the security sector. In addition, Dhembo claims that while improving the curricula and programmes, the needs of different stakeholders from academicians, to advocates of gender equality and women's rights, students, university management, curricula leaders/experts, instructors, and police units should be considered.⁶²

As stated by Dhembo, it is necessary for the debates on security issues in Albania to prioritise gender mainstreaming.⁶³ Dhembo explores the attitudes and opinions of the general public and members of the Albanian State Police regarding female participation and gender balance in police structures. She highlights gender-based prejudice as one of the main reasons for the low level of participation by women in this institution and calls for more efforts to be channelled in overcoming this problem.⁶⁴

Baka *et al.* and Medani offered a description of the role of women in the Albanian Armed Forces.⁶⁵ They shed light on the opportunities and obstacles faced during the process of changing gender equality relations within the Albanian Armed Forces, an institution traditionally dominated by men.⁶⁶ Baka *et al.* mention as a positive development the establishment in 2010 of a group working toward the implementation of the recommendations

57 Bajrami and Capo 2013; Klllogjri 2017; Garunja 2019.

58 Danaj *et al.* 2019; Dhembo 2010; Dhembo 2011.

59 Danaj *et al.* 2019.

60 Dhembo 2011, 15.

61 *Ibid.*, 23.

62 *Ibid.*

63 Dhembo 2013.

64 Dhembo 2010.

65 Baka *et al.* 2011; Medani 2013.

66 Baka *et al.* 2011, 67.

of the UNSCR 1325.⁶⁷ However, they emphasise the need for women to access decision-making institutions as well as the need for women to be promoted to higher positions within the Albanian Armed Forces. The authors claim that the integration of gender perspective in the Albanian Armed Forces requires the design of a comprehensive strategy, including operational planning and execution processes.⁶⁸ Similarly, Medani elaborates on the power of women in the Albanian Armed Forces by examining the challenges they face in military careers and the mechanisms for the protection and implementation of their rights within this institution.⁶⁹ According to Medani, women are skilful human resources with the “ability to solve complex, unstable, doubtful, and confusing situations related to war,”⁷⁰ but such skills need to be complemented with operational experience. She concludes that “supporting gender equality in the armed forces, the involvement of women in all levels of military decision making, and ensuring that they get full and equal rights in the armed forces is a key to successful transformation of the armed forces.”⁷¹

Security sector reform has been considered by Albanian scholars as an important mechanism to reflect on the role of women in the security sector, but as mentioned by Dhembo, women’s issues have been almost non-existent in the reform agenda.⁷² In another publication, Dhembo elaborates on the representativeness of women focusing on their access to job and career development opportunities in the security sector.⁷³ The results of her studies show that most of the efforts regarding the role of women within the security sector have focused on legal and institutional gender frameworks: “the weak link between the legal framework and concrete results seems to be in the implementation stage, resulting from a combination of a lack of resources, capacity, and will.”⁷⁴ Considering that gender segregation is highly evident in this sector, Dhembo suggests that gender and primarily women’s issues “should be priority issues in the agenda of policy- and decision-making in the security sector of Albania.”⁷⁵

Poni *et al.* bring another approach to the role of women in peace and security by employing “a gender perspective to analysing the role of women in preventing and countering radicalisation and violent extremism.”⁷⁶ Considering their access to family and community, “women’s civic engagement increases community resilience against violent narra-

67 Baka *et al.* 2011, 67.

68 *Ibid.*, 73.

69 Medani 2013.

70 *Ibid.*, 580.

71 *Ibid.*

72 Dhembo 2013.

73 Dhembo 2014.

74 Dhembo, 2013, 44.

75 Dhembo, 2014, 133.

76 Poni *et al.* 2021, 240.

tives and contributes to peace perseverance.”⁷⁷ In order to make women important actors in raising awareness of violent extremism and countering terrorism, there is a need to strengthen their position within the family and in the community, equip them with relevant information on violent extremism and terrorism, and train them to detect signs of radicalisation.⁷⁸

Albanian scholars have employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct their research on women, peace, and security. While qualitative methods include descriptive research and interviews to explain the state and situation of gender equality and domestic violence in Albania, quantitative methods have been used to gain insight from women themselves, through surveys targeting inequality and violence issues. Similarly, both methodologies are used by Albanian scholars to explore the role of Albanian women in the security sector. Qualitative methods have been used by scholars to describe the situation and position of Albanian women in armed and police forces through an analysis of secondary data and official documents focusing on an overview of institutional, structural, and legislative developments in that regard. Instruments like interviews and focus groups are used to understand the perspective of women on their position within this sector. Also, interviews are conducted to understand how women approach radicalisation and violent extremism. Survey research is employed to measure public opinion and the approach of the members of the Albanian State Police regarding the participation of women in this institution. Scholars endeavoured to maintain gender balance in sampling. In addition, content analysis is employed to analyse gender mainstreaming in security sector education programmes in Albania.

Through their publications, Albanian scholars bring into focus the main developments, gaps, and suggestions regarding gender mainstreaming in the security sector, focusing on the position of women in this sector. They highlight the establishment of institutional, structural, and legal frameworks in this regard, but they demand further steps and actions in promoting gender equality and improving the position of women in the security sector specifically and in Albanian society in general. Albania adopted the NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in 2018, while most of the publications examining this topic were written before 2018. These publications emphasised and called for the development and implementation of such an action plan as a crucial step in gender mainstreaming in the security sector and in depicting the role of women not only as a subject but also as an actor in this sector.

⁷⁷ Poni *et al.* 2021, 245.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 245–246.

Analysis of Findings

The analysis consists of two sections testing the propositions: P1 – “UNSCR 1325 has had a positive impact on the mainstreaming of women, peace, and security norms in the discourse of the Albanian political, academic and civil society elite” and P2 – “Internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms is less likely in Albania as it is not a conflict or post-conflict country.”

In support of proposition 1, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 has had a positive effect on mainstreaming the gender content in the discourse of the Albanian political, academic and civil society elite (See Table 2). The data reveals a clear trend toward greater UNSCR 1325-sensitivity in the national security discourse of Albania after the year 2000. The evidence shows that different aspects of UNSCR 1325 have been represented in the discourses. The same assertion can be made as evidenced by publications suggesting that the mainstreaming of women, peace, and security has increased markedly. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 decreases the chance of the discourses containing no reference to UNSCR 1325 or to women, peace, and security. However, this article reveals that not all discourses examined reflect the spirit of the UNSCR 1325. While the discourse of political, academic and civil society elite increasingly considers gender issues as part of the security concept, their discourse rarely makes specific references to the UNSCR 1325. Nevertheless, the UNSCR 1325-mainstreamed content has increased since UNSCR 1325 was implemented in Albania. Overall, the data reveals emerging UNSCR 1325-sensitivity in the security governance of Albania. Different aspects of UNSCR 1325 norms have been represented in the governance and in its reform. In support of proposition 1, the UNSCR 1325 has had a significant positive effect on the gender content in security governance, as illustrated by Table 2. It demonstrates a greater presence of instances under coding category 2 and an increase in both coding categories 1 and 3. The results of the previous section strongly suggest that UNSCR 1325 has resulted in more UNSCR 1325-mainstreamed political, civil society and academic discourse.

Coding categories	Mainstreaming Observations in governance reforms	Mainstreaming Observations in political discourse	Mainstreaming Observations in academic publishing
0	5	1	3
1	7	2	4
2	9	2	5
3	5	1	3

Table 2: *UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming in Albanian discourse*

The positive effect of the UNSCR 1325 disappears once a conflict is in consideration or when it is included in the analysis (P2). Thus, a conflict has been a predictor of the internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 in Albanian security governance. This article reveals the complexities involved in the transfer and internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms, in-

cluding some form of resistance is present, particularly as the relevant actors assume that UNSCR 1325 is primarily concerned with armed conflict or post-conflict environments. The analysis reveals that, despite an overall increase in activity in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 around the world, the conflict or post-conflict status of countries is a strong predictor of the transfer and internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms in some settings,⁷⁹ including in Albania. This is not to say that the Resolution does not matter for the Albanian elite, quite the contrary. Without it, there would have probably been much less mainstreaming of the UNSCR 1325 content in Albania. Rather, the core tenets and premises of the UNSCR 1325 appear to be activated selectively, based on the salience of the conflict in a specific UNSCR 1325 norm. This scenario showcases the contention and resistance in Albania to the internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms, reinforcing traditional gender norms. Albania has not yet contextualised locally the norms of women, peace, and security. The non-existence of armed conflict in Albania has greatly decreased the probability for internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms. The absence of armed conflict has considerably reduced the likelihood of UNSCR 1325 mainstreaming in Albania particularly as reflected in the governance reforms.

Conclusion

In scrutinising the extent of the mainstreaming of the UNSCR 1325 in Albanian political, academic and civil society discourse, this study makes a contribution to the empirical literature on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. This assessment detailed the progress that Albania had achieved in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and sought to identify its impact on the content of the discourse of Albania. It reviewed national commitments undertaken toward the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and provided an overview of the institutional and legal changes in Albania in this regard. The gender issue in the security sector in Albania is mainly integrated from the perspective of promotion of gender equality and empowerment rather than emphasising the importance of women in this sector as security agents. Thus far, Albania has been able to lay down the main pillars of its strategic framework in both its security sector and its gender equality and empowerment sector. It has attempted to develop a bridge between these two sectors through the development and implementation of the NAP on the UNSCR 1325. The development of a NAP has been part of Albania's efforts to contribute to peace and security at home and abroad. Examining the content of the discourse gives insight into the increasing presence of the UNSCR 1325 norms.

Albania has increased the participation of women in decision-making processes in different sectors including security, augmented the participation of women in peace-keeping operations around the world, and increased the contribution of women in conflict prevention and the peace processes in the country through their engagement in the security

79 Barrow 2010; Arostegui 2013; Cohn and Duncanson 2020; George 2016; Hudson 2005; Madsen 2019; O'Sullivan 2019; McLeod 2011; Björkdahl and Selimovic 2015; Singh 2020.

sector. There has been a clear resolve by Albanian national authorities to boost their efforts for greater inclusion and participation of women in the decision-making processes of Albania and in increasing the role of women in internal conflict prevention initiatives and in peace-keeping missions abroad, which are in the spirit of the UNSCR 1325.

Drawing on the literature on norms transfer and its phases, we, on the other hand, identified the resistance to the internalisation of the UNSCR 1325 norms. Rather than unconditionally following the prescriptions of the UNSCR 1325, Albanian actors appear to turn to the relevance of conflict for guidance in designing UNSCR 1325-mainstreamed security policies. This pattern runs counter to the spirit of UNSCR 1325, diluting the universality of norms regarding the participation and protection of women, and activating them selectively where armed conflicts have been the case. This is harmful because, as important an issue as it is, the conflict captures only one dimension of the UNSCR 1325. The socio-economic and political marginalisation of women is widespread phenomena not only in settings of armed conflict but also in settings where armed conflict is not present as in the case of Albania. Relying on the presence of armed conflict as a guideline for where the empowerment of women may be more or less necessary is therefore misguided. The apparently ingrained perception of women as only important agents when armed conflict is a factor is counterproductive to the mainstreaming of the UNSCR 1325. It undermines women's agency, diminishes their value in society, and obscures their right to full and equal participation in society. One way to counter the selective activation of the UNSCR 1325 would be to further strengthen the norms of women's agency and participation by emphasising their universality in all contexts and divorcing these norms from the occurrence of conflicts or in conflict or post-conflict settings.

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