


BOOK REVIEW

***Deploying Feminism: The Role of Gender in NATO Military Operations.* By Stéfanie von Hlatky. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 248 pp. \$34.95 (cloth). ISBN: 9780197653524.**

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The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda faces tensions between its feminist roots and its implementation by military organizations. In *Deploying Feminism*, Stéfanie von Hlatky explores NATO's adoption and implementation of WPS principals, highlighting the successes, challenges, and paradoxes that occur when a military alliance that privileges masculine military culture adopts a feminist-grounded framework. Despite successfully institutionalizing WPS norms, von Hlatky argues that NATO continues to look “at gender through ballistic eyewear” (50), which distorts the original intention of the WPS agenda.

Scholars have long noted the contradictions and tensions inherent in the militarization and instrumentalization of women's rights and gender equality. In this book, von Hlatky explores the process through which feminist WPS norms are adapted by military organizations as “norm distortion,” which occurs when a norm's original meaning is transformed during implementation in a way that not only fails to fulfill the original intent of the norm, but also actively changes its purpose. In the case of NATO and WPS norms, this occurs primarily through the prioritization of how women's participation and gender analyses can improve operational effectiveness first and foremost. Von Hlatky argues that this norm distortion is rooted in the principal-agent problem, as NATO (the principal) institutionalizes WPS norms but relies on national militaries (its agents) to implement them and lacks sufficient control and oversight over its agents to enforce consistent implementation, resulting in a wide range of compliance and (mis)interpretations.

The book's first and second chapters introduce von Hlatky's main theoretical argument on the process of norm distortion of WPS norms in NATO, while also grounding the argument in scholarly feminist debates. Von Hlatky traces how women's representation in military forces shifted from being seen as a liability to an operational advantage. Yet she problematizes narratives that instrumentalize

women as overlooking the hypermasculine cultures of the military, pigeonholing and assigning unfair burdens to women, increasing risks for women, and ignoring the needs of local women.

In the third chapter, von Hlatky introduces the process through which NATO adopted and implements the WPS agenda. Masterfully profiling the immense complexity of NATO, the chapter demonstrates the principal-agent problem's roots. NATO clearly institutionalizes the WPS agenda in its policies and directives, and yet it has relatively little control over the actions of its members. This is a problem not only during a mission, when individuals and units may interpret and implement the WPS directives and policies differently, but going back even further, to national standards and priorities that may or may not be favorable to WPS norms. The distortion of WPS norms is evident as von Hlatky traces how policies put into place by NATO headquarters are implemented at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. What becomes clear is an intricate "dance" through which NATO must encourage its member states to comply with its WPS agenda, while also being reliant on the continued cooperation of its member states and its inability to perfectly enforce its agenda.

In Chapters 4–6, von Hlatky presents her case studies and draws on rich fieldwork and interview evidence. She traces the process of WPS implementation in the Kosovo Force, the enhanced forward presence (eFP), and the NATO Mission in Iraq. Her analysis reveals that variations in the implementation and distortion of WPS norms are influenced by the command structure, civil-military balance, mission tasks, and gender composition. Across all the missions, WPS implementation focused on the ways in which gender analysis and women's representation can improve operational effectiveness, at the cost of often overlooking how to improve gender equality as a desired outcome on its own or lacking implementation altogether when the benefits for operational effectiveness were unclear, as was the case with eFP given its focus on deterrence. Moreover, the case studies highlight a tension between NATO's attempts to promote women's representation in other countries' security forces and encourage gender equality more broadly, while women are under-represented within NATO personnel. Moreover, the cases demonstrate the challenges of implementing WPS norms in the face of resistance, leading to their dilution to "homeopathic doses" (146).

*Deploying Feminism* additionally displays the important role that individuals as agents play in NATO's implementation of WPS norms. Von Hlatky notes that NATO is a useful case since it is highly bureaucratic and hierarchical, which ensures the implementation of its directives and policies, but, in line with the principal-agent problem, her analysis is rife with examples of how individuals play key roles either as champions of WPS norms or as detractors. From commanders who not only accept the advice of gender advisers (GENADs), but also bear the costs of ensuring them the necessary resources and access, to the GENADs who rely on their own personalities, networks, and creativity to overcome a daunting task, to the reluctant individuals who comply with the required WPS policies to the least degree possible, individuals radically alter the implementation of WPS norms. At the heart of these militarized hypermasculine

bureaucracies are individuals “who perpetuat[e] that culture and who disrupt it” (25) and thus dictate the degree to which norm distortion occurs.

*Deploying Feminism* confronts the challenges and opportunities present when military organizations translate norms into practice. While the overwhelming focus on operational effectiveness minimizes and dilutes WPS norms, opportunities to ensure a more consistent and wholistic implementation remain. In particular, von Hlatky challenges NATO to take more direct action, including setting targets for women’s representation.

*Deploying Feminism* deftly bridges the divides between academic debates, civil society advocacy, and policy and military considerations of the implementation of WPS norms into outcomes. Von Hlatky provides a thorough view of the complex challenges to the implementation of WPS norms, while unflinchingly holding accountable those who distort the norms from their original purpose. *Deploying Feminism* greatly contributes to our understanding of the roots of the limited progress in the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

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