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Deconstructing Discourse:
Gender and Operational Effectiveness in the Swedish Armed Forces

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Abstract

Fifteen years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the resolution and its effects remains contested. Sweden, a champion of gender equality, was one of the first countries to adopt a National Action Plan and is now leading the push for worldwide implementation of UNSCR 1325. At the front of Sweden's internationalist efforts is the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF). Internally, the SAF acts to be a gender equal employer, while externally applying a gender-perspective in missions to increase operational effectiveness. Even though gender is receiving increased attention, questions arise concerning the military as an institution historically dominated by norms of masculinity. Through a poststructural feminist framework that conceptualizes the military as an institution of hegemonic masculinity, this thesis deconstructs and identifies six prevalent discourses within the SAF; *gender as a tool for operational effectiveness*; *women as separate and complimentary*; *quantifying women's bodies*; *protecting the vulnerable woman*; *gender - a woman's issue* and *portraying the Swedish image*. This study argues that women's agency weakens, the importance of gender is diminished, and the hierarchical separation between the sexes is reinforced, through these discourses. As gender is treated as a strategic tool adapted for organizational purposes, its potential to transform understandings of conflict and security weakens. Moreover, norms of masculinity are still deeply embedded in the institution and have, to a large extent, remained unquestioned and reproduced.

Keywords: Swedish Armed Forces, poststructuralist feminism, institutions of hegemonic masculinity, UNSCR 1325, operational effectiveness

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1. Introduction

Fifteen years have passed since the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (hereafter called UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security. The resolution has over the years gotten increasingly more attention, and women are becoming recognized as important actors in the areas of peace and security. This development is connected to changes brought on by processes of globalization, where the conceptualization of security has broadened from being an issue of the sovereign nation-state, towards considerations of human security. Along these lines, some countries and their national militaries have assumed internationalist agendas that promote peace and security beyond national borders, and are guided by respect for human rights and principles such as the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P).

For Sweden, a small country with a history of neutrality policy in armed conflict, dedication to global solidarity, and a champion of women’s rights, this goes hand in hand. Sweden was one of the first countries to adopt a National Action Plan for Resolution 1325 and is now adamant in pushing for its continued implementation worldwide. The gendered dimension of peace and security is becoming more recognized, not least since the Social democratic government took office in October 2014, and with foreign minister Margot Wallström in the lead, the Swedish government declared a new *feminist* foreign policy. In this, ‘Women, Peace and Security’ is a theme put high on the agenda (Olsson 2014; Wallström 2015). To name its foreign policy feminist was indeed unique, but perhaps not equally surprising coming from a Social democratic Swedish government, which historically has been an ideational force in the creation of the Swedish self-narrative as a ‘good global citizen’ (Bergman 2007).

As is the case with most countries, the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) is a principal actor in Sweden’s internationalist efforts. Representing Sweden in many international contexts, the SAF must be an organization that respects human rights, gender equality, and reflects the diversity of Swedish society (Försvarsmakten 2012a). Alongside internationalist commitments, the conceptualization of the military and its role has gradually shifted away from merely waging war and defending the nation’s borders, towards the promotion of international peace and security, democratic values and human rights. Besides this, there have been a number of other developments in the SAF, where the removal of compulsory conscription for male citizens and the full inclusion of women, have meant a transformation of the Swedish defense.

For the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the Swedish National Action Plan, the Swedish Armed Forces have articulated an approach where a gender-perspective is applied in missions for the purpose of increasing operational effectiveness. The SAF is also dedicated to being a gender equal employer. While the focus on gender has surely meant many positive developments, it also raises questions about how such an approach to gender and gender equality is expressed in an institution long dominated by men, norms of masculinity, and gendered assumptions about the role and place for women in the private sphere, far away from military practices and public life. Applying a gender-perspective for the aim of increased operational effectiveness indicates that gender is being constructed as a strategic tool for military purposes. However, it is necessary to dig deeper and investigate the meanings of this and other discursive constructs concerning the SAF's work on gender.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

With a theoretical framework stemming from poststructural feminism and the notion of institutions of hegemonic masculinity, this thesis deconstructs discourses pertaining to gender in official documents that are central to the work of the Swedish Armed Forces. The purpose is to examine the discourses and their implications for the way gender is conceptualized in the SAF. By challenging the discourses, I want to add to the existing academic field in order to push it forward. This study is positioned in the field of feminist security studies, as it engages with discussions on gender dichotomies, gendered norms and representations in relation to military practices. In general, the increasing recognition of women's roles in issues of peace and security, particularly after UN Resolution 1325, has made it even more pertinent to ask questions about how gender is being reconfigured in military practices. As such, the following research questions guide the study;

- How is gender discursively constructed, and how can these constructions be understood in light of the military as an institution of hegemonic masculinity?
- What implications may the discursive constructions have for the understanding of gender roles?

Studying the SAF is highly relevant due to its dedication of implementing UNSCR 1325 and marketing itself as a gender-aware and peacekeeping-oriented organization. Furthermore, the 'Swedish model' of integrating a gender-perspective as an operational aspect has become internationally known and influenced other countries in their own efforts. This makes the discourses ever more important to deconstruct.

1.2 The Academic Field

A growing field of literature concerning gender and militaries has emerged over the past two decades, as feminist scholars have expanded research in the field of women, peace and security. The adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 has resulted in both the recognition of women's vulnerability in conflict, and an increased focus on the involvement of women in all aspects of peace and security. While women in military practices are nothing new, the resolution puts pressure on countries to increase their endeavors for the inclusion of more women in international military missions, both as peacekeepers and as agents at negotiation tables. Thus, as women are increasingly considered to be a crucial part of peacemaking, discussions concerning gendered features of military organizations and practices have become more salient. While UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions were the results of many years of hard work by women's organizations, it is also double-edged for those who question its underlying gendered assumptions, constructing men as 'masculine warriors' and women as 'beautiful souls'. There are also divisions among feminists who disagree on the very legitimacy of military force, and whether feminist theory and action should be pacifist.

Some scholars point to the growing body of evidence that show how the presence of women in military practices, particularly peacekeeping, can improve effectiveness (Dharmapuri 2011; Eduards 2012; Bridges and Horsfall 2009). In this, stereotypical feminine characteristics, such as being gentle, nurturing and peaceful, are typically highlighted as making women well suited for peacekeeping. Interestingly, the very characteristics that before served as a reason for the exclusion of women are now appealed to for their inclusion (DeGroot 2001). Women are considered useful because they add legitimacy to peacekeeping missions, partly due to their assumed ability to communicate with local populations for the purpose of intelligence gathering, and their ability to exercise sensitivity in contexts where sexual violence has been prevalent. Following several scandals on human rights violations by UN peacekeepers, legitimacy to the missions are to be restored by deploying female soldiers, who through their presumed 'pacifying' effect on male comrades, can diminish the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse of local populations (Simic 2010; Valenius 2007; Olsson and Tryggestad 2001).

However, these arguments are problematized by feminist scholars who claim that such statements ignore differences among women, and portrays women as either victims or peacemakers only. Efforts of gender mainstreaming and gender-balancing that simply 'add women and stir', particularly in the UN system, does not challenge gendered power structures. Instead, they risk being merely cosmetic changes that make little difference to

traditional gender roles, gendered stereotyping and dichotomies (Valenius 2007:513). The approaches are also critiqued because gender is largely equated with women and reduced to a problem-solving tool, stripped of its critical elements. For example, Simic (2010) argues that the UN agenda, which aims to deploy more women in peacekeeping missions, is both contentious and essentialist because it relies heavily on a set of stereotypical feminine characteristics. The inclusion of female peacekeepers is promoted in order to decrease sexual violence and improve the UN's reputation, not to achieve gender equality.

In recent years, feminist scholars have set out to investigate gender roles in militaries and peacekeeping, placing particular focus on women's experiences. The findings have varied. Sion's (2009:490) research on Dutch female peacekeepers indicates that traditional gender roles and a combat-oriented mentality are reproduced despite the "new military model" of peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is regarded as soft and feminine compared to traditional combat that soldiers are generally trained for. It presents a challenge to the masculine identity cultivated in the military organization and the inclusion of female peacekeepers further destabilizes the masculine ideal. Interestingly, female peacekeepers tend to accentuate their individualism while distancing themselves from other women. Bad characteristics of women were compared to good characteristics of men, in order to negotiate their own self-image and to become accepted in the larger male collectivity (ibid.). Contradictory to previous arguments, some female peacekeepers showed no interest in communicating with the local population (ibid.:487).

Moreover, Valenius (2007) findings question the argument of including women for the purpose of altering male soldiers' sexual behavior. Female soldiers in the study tended to stay away from situations where they risked being allocated the role of the 'pacifier' or 'civilizer' towards male comrades. Surely, if the responsibility of male sexual behavior is placed on female soldiers, underlying power structures and issues of military masculinities are left untouched. Yet another study, with a focus on the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF), suggests that despite protecting human security internationally, and downplaying the armed forces traditional warring role, the NAF has remained a "deeply conservative institution" in regards to gender roles and the "conservatism influences how military operations are conducted" (Haaland 2012:64).

In a similar line, Eduards (2012) emphasize the existing gender-tensions within the SAF and the discrepancies between day-to-day experiences of women in the military and the claimed significance of women to the organization. The contradictions relate to positioning women as equal to men, while at the same time using difference as one of the main arguments

for inclusion. Edwards argue that the SAF's equation of gender with women limit women's possibilities to challenge the organization's practices and discourses (2012:52-53). Meanwhile, Kronsell (2012) investigates the role of gender in the 'post-national' Swedish defense. Through an historical account, she shows links between gender, nation building, identity construction and the military. Despite deeply embedded norms of masculinity and militarism, Kronsell argues that the post-national military has opened up spaces for alternative masculinities and femininities, which has left the dichotomy of the 'protector' and 'protected' somewhat transformed and challenged. Similarly, Egnell et al. (2012) provide a thorough overview of the SAF's transformation in recent years, with a focus on its efforts of implementing UNSCR 1325 and applying a gender-perspective into its institutional practices, primarily concentrating on external operations. They illustrate how the SAF has combined a gender-perspective with traditional military values by adopting a view of gender as something that can add effectiveness to operations. By utilizing UNSCR 1325 as a strategic framework, applying a gender-perspective means taking different groups (men, women, boys and girls) into consideration in planning, carrying out and assessing operations, to provide military effectiveness in missions.

This short overview has made it clear that there are controversies and tensions concerning gender in military organizations. While some evidence indicates challenges to traditional gender roles in peacekeeping-oriented militaries particularly, traditional military structures also exhibit strong inflexibility to change. Women's participation has illuminated the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, the protector and protected, and women's roles are thus highly contested and contradictory. Clearly, incorporating women and UNSCR 1325 into military practices is not unproblematic and presents a conundrum for both practitioners and feminist scholars. Here, the SAF is an interesting case, as the "Swedish Model" of integrating a gender-perspective has become internationally known (Egnell 2012). The SAF's approach to utilize gender as a strategic tool for operational effectiveness may significantly inspire and influence other countries in their own efforts. Consequently, it becomes important to deconstruct discourses on gender in militaries, and to investigate what implications these discourses have on how gender and gender roles are constructed. It is important to ask critical questions regarding the discourses that emerge when gender is applied in the military, an institution that was long an arena exclusively for male citizens, and the primary vehicle for organized violence.

1.3 Terminology

Before embarking on the continuation of this chapter, there are a few words and concepts, used throughout that are essential to explain. Firstly, *gender* is understood as socially constructed through discourse. Gender is not to be conflated with, or seen as dependent on, biological *sex*.

SAF is used as an acronym of the Swedish Armed Forces, and is used interchangeably with *the armed forces*. *NAP* is an acronym of National Action Plan. Throughout this thesis it is used to refer to the Swedish National Action Plan on integrating UNSCR 1325, and later also 1820. *UNSCR 1325* is used interchangeably with Resolution 1325 and 1325 and refers to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2000. Similarly, *UNSCR 1820* is used interchangeably with Resolution 1820 and 1820. It refers to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence in War, adopted in 2008.

Operational effectiveness, or military effectiveness, is a traditional military term aimed at an effect-based thinking regarding operations. In this thesis, it is used to denote a specific viewpoint taken from the Swedish Armed Forces regarding the integration of a gender-perspective for the purpose of achieving effective military operations. In this, women and girls, men and boys should be taken into consideration in all stages of operations. Increased operational effectiveness is used by the SAF as a central argument for the importance of implementing 1325, adopting a gender-perspective, and achieving gender equality, in the armed forces.

1.4 Disposition

The introductory chapter has thus far presented an introduction to the topic at hand, the purpose and research questions that guide this thesis. Chapter two outlines the theoretical and methodological framework. After briefly discussing the emergence of poststructuralist feminism, it moves on to the theoretical concepts of discourse, power and knowledge, as well as institutions of hegemonic masculinity. Three deconstructive strategies are presented as part of the methodological approach where focus is on revealing dichotomies, contradictions and silences in the texts. Chapter two ends with a presentation of the material used and the limitations of this thesis. The following chapter provides some contextual background on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and recent historical transformation of the Swedish Armed forces. Through the theoretical and methodological framework, the fourth chapter analyzes several discursive themes that emerge from the material. The identified

discourses in the documents concern *utilizing gender as a tool for operational effectiveness; women as separate and complimentary; quantifying women's bodies; protecting the vulnerable woman; constructing gender as a woman's issue and portraying the Swedish image*. The final chapter provides a concluding discussion and suggests further research.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Before presenting the theoretical and methodological premises, it is relevant to start by locating it within the wider poststructuralist and feminist debate. This provides an understanding of the underlying assumptions of both the conceptual and methodological framework. The following part of the chapter goes deeper into some of the concepts adapted from poststructuralist feminists and the concept of institutions of hegemonic masculinity. Subsequently, the deconstructive methodology is discussed, followed by shortly highlighting the material and this study's limitations.

2.1 Poststructuralism(s) and Feminism(s)

Poststructuralism is plural and includes a wide range of scholars and theoretical positions. Though there are certain assumptions relating to language, meaning and subjectivity that poststructuralist perspectives share. Language is crucial in analyzing social institutions, meanings, power and an individual's subjectivity, because it is through discursive practices that they are constructed. Feminism is also multiple and feminist strands vary in their ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches. Nonetheless, feminists have a common point of departure where they seek to investigate, understand and challenge the structure of patriarchy in society. Patriarchy acquires power from the social meanings that have been allocated to biological differences between women and men.

Despite their diversities, poststructuralism and feminism have been joined together as feminist scholars have taken inspiration from key thinkers in the poststructuralist tradition, particularly French philosopher Michel Foucault. While the work of Foucault has received serious criticism from feminists who disagree with his anti-essentialist view on identity and who wish to theorize on a 'global sisterhood', others have insisted that poststructuralism can provide useful insights to feminist theory. The conceptualization of gender as a discursive *effect* rather than as an inherent, essential *attribute* within individuals particularly attracts feminist thinkers (Helemen and Rumens 2008). For the purpose of understanding the pervasiveness of social hierarchies and the production of divisive and unequal conceptualizations of social groups, integrating poststructuralist and feminist perspectives is especially productive. As such, poststructuralist feminism has been on the rise in academic circles in recent years. This is partly because it offers tools that allow the researcher to go beyond essentialist conceptualizations of inequalities and understandings of women's lives (ibid.). Poststructuralist feminists believe that gender is not bound by biology and that

biological sex determines neither social action nor social behavior. Gender is not given or inherent in individuals at birth but rather something that is preformed, defined through and within discursive practices (Butler 2007:xv). This means that gender identities are shifting and contingent upon the context within which they take place (ibid:25).

Opposed to standpoint feminists, whose ontological perspective claim biological sex to be negotiated through social constructions of femininity and masculinity, poststructuralist feminists believe that biological sex has no meaning outside of discourse and its social constructions of masculinity and femininity (Hansen 2010:21). Among the strands that poststructuralist feminism reacts to is liberal feminism, which assumes that individuals ontologically precede society, that individuals are rational, self-interested and motivated by autonomously formed preferences. Liberal feminism is informed by *difference feminism*, which puts focus on the cultural and material disparities between men and women (True 2010). It also regards institutions as gender-neutral, becoming gendered primarily through legal inequality and acts of individuals. Liberal feminists support working within already established political, social, and economic institutions in order to change their legal frameworks. Their focus on the emancipation for women – an assumingly universal group - revolves around the provision of equal rights and access to political decision-making. With the same opportunities as men to fully participate in public and political life, women will “realize their potential and no longer be subordinate to men” (McLaren 2002:6). Poststructuralist feminism rejects the liberal principle of sameness, because it positions women as the same as, or equal, to men, but pays no attention to the underlying male norm against which everyone is judged. The liberal approach is ‘quantitative’ because it assumes that adjusting legal frameworks and mainstreaming more women into public life will eliminate inequalities. Its focus on the individual and its emphasis on rationality, while simultaneously downplaying the emotional, can be critiqued because this is generally associated with traditional male characteristics. Thus, it implies that women are to become ‘more like men’. It largely depends on essentialist¹ categories of the subject, and ignores the differences among women and men, as well as the underlying power structures of social institutions. Instead, poststructuralist feminism allows for an analysis of how individuals give meaning to discourses and how certain discourses hold the ‘knowledge’ of what is to be regarded as masculine and feminine within a particular context (Helemen and Rumens 2008).

¹ Essentialism is the view that individuals have a set of attributes that constitute their *real* and *true* human nature (Schwandt 2007).

2.2 Studying Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity

With this brief overview in mind, the theoretical and methodological premises are established below. By drawing upon conceptualizations from a poststructuralist feminist framework, this section begins by discussing discourse as an inscriptive and constitutive part of social reality. It discusses power as relational and practiced in all social relations through discourse. Knowledge is closely intertwined with discourse and power, wherein particular knowledge becomes established as 'common-sense' truths that may be utilized by those in power. The view of discourse, power and knowledge in this thesis has its base in a Foucauldian understanding. Essentialist conceptualizations of the human subject are rejected, as gender is seen as an *effect* of discourse rather than an essential *attribute*. The knowledge attached to biological sex differences, and its classification of individuals into hierarchical dichotomies, is understood as a fundamental organizing principle in society. Lastly, the concept of institutions of hegemonic masculinity, as developed by R.W. Connell, is drawn upon in order to theorize gender roles and gendered representations within institutions largely dominated by men and certain imaginaries of masculinity.

Language is of ontological importance, as it is through the construction of language that things are given meaning and a particular identity. Language is not an unambiguous carrier of a reality that already exists; it is inscriptive and constructive in itself. Its social character entails that individuals are discursively socialized into a series of collective codes and social conventions (Hansen 2006:18). Subjectivity - an individual's sense of self - is socially constructed through language, rather than language being a mere expression of subjectivity (Weedon 1987:20-21). Thus, discourses are complex systems of language that articulate our thoughts and actions. Because discourses are historically and culturally specific, social meaning is in constant flux. Though despite their fluid character, particular discourses can become hegemonic and temporary fixtures of discourses can make them fairly stable in a certain time and place (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:29). Dryzek (2006:7-8) explains the pervasiveness of how hegemonic discourses operate;

A discourse is hegemonic if it has no serious rivals, such that it becomes ingrained in the understanding of all relevant actors, defining their common sense and conditioning their interactions. Hegemonic discourses can serve some and oppress others. [...] Truly hegemonic discourses are so ingrained that they are not even recognized by those subject to them, but are instead treated as part of the natural order of things.

As such, hegemonic discourses often derive power by appealing to 'common-sense'

knowledge and 'human nature'. For example, scientific and medical knowledge play a central role in establishing the truthfulness of hegemonic discourses (Weedon 1987:77-78). In this way, they remain largely unquestioned because within that given context, most individuals consider them to be 'common-sense'. While discourses can be contested, challenged and modified, the concern of conforming to normality often leads to an acceptance of dominant discourses.

In this framework, hegemonic discourses that maintain the separation between men and women are fundamental to the ordering of social life (ibid.:75-76). Patriarchy is a particularly powerful discourse because it appeals to the biological differences inherent in human nature, and can thus establish its truthfulness and gain legitimacy from scientific knowledge. According to Derrida (1976), language should be understood as a system of juxtapositions, where one side in a relational opposition is privileged over the other. Such dichotomies divide the world into either-or categories and the existence of everything in between is denied (Feldman, 1995). 'Man' is defined through a series of interlinking qualities that become labeled 'masculine', while 'woman' is simultaneously defined by a series of oppositional qualities labeled 'feminine' (Hansen 2006:19). Masculinities and femininities are then a range of qualities, roles and behaviors normally associated with men and women respectively. Masculinities and femininities are discursively constructed, multiple and hierarchical.

Connell (2005) argues that hegemonic masculinity is an archetypal masculinity that holds a position of relative strength within certain configurations of gender relations, and has the power to label others as 'Others'. It is the current strategy - or answer - for the legitimacy and preservation of patriarchy. Since it takes place in a particular context it should be understood as a "historically mobile relation" (ibid.:77). While hegemonic masculinity is normative, with very few to meet the standards, it is idealized and culturally pervasive to the point that other actors position themselves in relation to it (Wadley 2010:49). Furthermore, it is beneficial for the majority of men because it continues the oppositional hierarchy between men and women (Connell 2005:79). The most powerful societal discourses have their base in institutions and are the result of long processes of overlapping, entrenched power relations (Weedon 1987:109). Thus, for a hegemonic masculinity to gain hold and claim authority, there needs to be a link between discursive ideals and institutional power.

The conceptualization of power and the understanding of its functioning through discourse is another central element. Relations of power are made possible, established and maintained through discourse (Gannon and Davies, 2012). Power is not something that one can possess, but a relation wherein strength is relative to the position one holds in a power

relationship (Foucault 1977:203). In this sense, Foucault speaks of “the omnipotence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (as cited in Shepherd 2008:22).

When discourses and networks of power become institutionalized, they help to uphold the relative strength of already privileged groups and continue power relations, which are often particularly unequal when institutionalized. From a Foucauldian perspective, those in positions of relative strength in a power relationship, utilize knowledge to reinforce their position (Foucault 1977:207-208). In the knowledge about human beings there are inherent elements of categorization of subjects and groups, such as the link between man and masculinity, woman and femininity. As this knowledge becomes institutionalized and accepted as a ‘truth’, individuals are ascribed a defined identity (Hörnqvist 1996:166). Identity is then conceptualized as relational, with a marker of identity produced by reference to something it is not, creating categorizations and juxtapositions of Self and Other. Individuals become defined not by their own individuality, but by the assumed characteristics of social groups they seemingly belong. As such, individual identity is “constituted within and through a collective terrain” (Hansen 2006:6). Sjoberg and Via (2010:4) refers to this process as ‘gendering’ when it applies to classifications of gender groups. For it to effectively control and govern individuals, subjects must themselves identify with the subject-position that dominant discourses assign to them, and exercise their agency accordingly. As this process of discursive constitution of subjectivity is continuously played out throughout life, gender differences become widely internalized and normalized (Weedon 1987:112).

Bearing in mind Connell’s conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, we now turn to institutions of hegemonic masculinity. The concept is central to this thesis’ understanding of gendered representations in the SAF. It is aligned with the understanding of discourse, power, knowledge, and essentialist representations of gender in a poststructuralist feminist framework. In institutions of hegemonic masculinity, male bodies dominate and have historically dominated the organization to the point that particular types of masculinity have gained hold, become common-sense and normalized (Kronsell 2006:108). The norm of hegemonic masculinity is discursively constructed as one pole in a relational opposition, where the other pole is defined by its deviance from that norm. In the setting of an institution of hegemonic masculinity, the deviant pole becomes the category of ‘not-men’. The military is particularly central in this regard because it is the most prominent institution of hegemonic masculinity (Morgan 1994:165). This is due to its history of men being the exclusive actors

within the organization, and its dependence on certain forms of masculinity, which have made the connection between the soldier and masculinity appear natural. Furthermore, due to the correlation between the military and the survival of the nation, it has historically been more influential than other institutions (Kronsell, 2012). When gender is the topic in the military, it generally does not relate to men or masculinity. As male dominance and hegemonic masculinity norms are naturalized within the organization, gender is generally made visible only as it applies to women or femininity. The simple fact that men are soldiers while women often are *female* soldiers (ibid.:46), illustrate the deviant feminine in the setting. The strong masculine protector is in juxtaposition with the weak feminine protected. This dichotomous logic helps to efficiently categorize individuals, but also invites oversimplified ways of seeing social relations. It creates hierarchies that become internalized and depoliticized. Moreover, it supports social patterns that are reductionist, static and limits critical reflection (Peterson and Runyan 2010:49-51). Therefore, it is crucial to question the taken-for-granted, naturalized categorizations in institutions of hegemonic masculinity, particularly because they tend to close off subject positions that deviate from the categorical relationships.

Nonetheless, in order to exercise resistance towards hegemonic discourses in institutions of hegemonic masculinity, it is crucial to understand the network of discourses and institutionalized knowledge - the common-sense - invoked for their justification. It is necessary to closely investigate and unpack discursive practices in which particular qualities become defined as feminine or masculine, and to question the hierarchical power relations resulting from it (Connell 2005:81). A poststructuralist feminist perspective can, in this sense, provide significant theoretical tools for recognizing gender as a particularly dominating, detrimental, and largely unacknowledged version of reality (Peterson and Runyan 2010:75). As such, this thesis is aligned with the poststructuralist feminist agenda in its search for ways to interrupt the grip dichotomies have on our thoughts and identities (Gannon and Davies, 2012). In the following sections, the philosophical basis is discussed before turning to the methodological approach. Three strategies, applied for deconstructing the documents, are presented.

2.4 Philosophical Issues

Theory and method in a poststructuralist framework are closely intertwined and must therefore be dealt with jointly. Many aspects of the thesis' ontological and epistemological approach have already been covered at this point but will be developed.

As it has been argued throughout this chapter, language is not a neutral carrier of facts

about the world that exists 'out there'; it partakes in the very creation and modification of social reality, our identities and relations (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:3). The understanding of phenomenon cannot be separated from the knowledge and values that produced it (Sandu 2011:40). Thus, this framework invariably denies the positivist epistemological take on social reality, knowledge and scientific research, which argues that through the use of scientific method it is possible to separate facts about social reality from values, and that the subject can be positioned outside of reality to observe it objectively. Furthermore, it rejects the claim that social reality is the result of particular laws inherent in human nature and rational action (Peterson and Runyan 2010:43-46).

Philosophical ideas about inherent laws of nature do not end there, but can be related to the concept of cosmopolitan militaries. Though the debate between cosmopolitan and communitarian philosophy in global ethics will not be extensively dealt with here, it is important to shortly discuss cosmopolitan militaries in relation to the articulated framework. The Swedish Armed Forces is among the militaries that have embraced notions of human security and human rights. Such militaries are often referred to as 'cosmopolitan-minded' because they devote time and resources towards protecting the security and rights of distant others, frequently through peacekeeping missions. Cosmopolitan militaries can be considered paradoxical in so far as they use soldiers that are trained for combat within institutions where the nationalist project, violence and masculinity are deeply intertwined. At the same time, they are to protect non-nationals and enforce peace rather than wage war, sometimes with the use of force (Elliott and Cheeseman 2002).

Ideas about a cosmopolitan world have its base in that, "humankind is ultimately bound together as a single moral community (a community of fate) with shared and equally-valued rights and obligations [...]" (Elliott and Cheeseman 2001:4). Beck and Sznaider (2006:1) argue that cosmopolitanism contributes to overcoming dualisms and converting the language of "either-or" into "both-and". This indicates a chance of opening up our constructed collective identities and national solidarities, which the nation-state relies upon, because in a globalized world we can surely have unities beyond this. Our identities are much more fluid than the binary of 'us' and 'them' (Benhabib 2006:68). On the other hand, cosmopolitan ideas are critiqued for overlooking the importance of identity politics and the influence of community relationships on people's lives (Elliott and Cheeseman 2002:7). Cosmopolitanism assumes a universal morality inherent in us all like a 'law of nature', and beyond the scope of historical and contextual influences. But this becomes problematic because reality is understood as discursively constructed and contextual, power is implicated in each

relationship, and truth is inevitably linked to power. Currently ‘common-sense truths’, such as human rights and liberal democracy, despite how positive they may be, can be seen as hegemonic discourses stemming from the western world. When they are spread, they help preserve the relative strength of those ideas that already hold a position of power. Questions can thus be raised about whose interests are served when cosmopolitan militaries are deployed. Can it be seen as a universalizing and hierarchical project that may quash dissimilarities that stand outside the hegemonic ideal?

The discourses in society delimit and exclude, but also help us interpret what is relevant, probable and possible (Börjesson and Palmblad, 2007). Language is an action and activity that constitutes and evokes certain versions of reality, some of which become normalized. Therefore, it becomes crucial to investigate these versions of reality. The approach here is not to find the ‘right’ or ‘true’ version of reality, but rather to question what qualifies as truth and reality, in a given time and place. Because of this, discourses are not merely what is said in a given context, but also what sets the limits to the *possibility* of using language in particular ways. In this sense, discourse is always implicated with power.

Recognizing this thesis’ ontological and epistemological framework, it also relevant to mention the role and subjectivity of the researcher. Scientific research and knowledge has been utilized by political and bureaucratic systems. These systems have then become the power that largely defines the premises for the continuation of scientific research. Consequently, the researcher’s task can be regarded as to investigate the circumstances and provisions for different perspectives on social reality, and perhaps also to seek alternatives to the dominating versions of reality (Börjesson and Palmblad, 2007). Surely, absolute objectivity cannot be achieved in the investigation of social reality because the observer of such a reality is, at all times, working from within the very context that is observed. Thus, all parts of social research, from the questions we ask to the methods we use, are non-separable from the systems of meaning and power relations within the given context (Peterson and Runyan 2010:46). Therefore, it becomes crucial to acknowledge that the written and spoken words in research are screened from the viewpoint of the researcher. Researchers must be aware of their own subjectivity and how they are implicated in the research, because there cannot be a description of phenomena that is innocent, transparent or pure (Vargai-Dobai 2012:9-12). Consequently, while deconstructing the texts in the research, I must also accept that my own subjectivity shapes the interpretations that take form. As a researcher I am familiar with, and operating within, the Swedish context. Though at the same time I am positioned outside the organization and thus not an insider. This could be both an impediment

as I may not be sufficiently aware of the organizational culture, and an asset as I can retain a certain distance to the object of study. I must recognize that my own constructed gender-identity most likely affects the way I read and interpret the material. Hence, my research does not claim an entirely truthful, objective reality, but a knowledge that is situated within the current context. In other words, it provides a 'snapshot' of a current representation of the social world. This does not mean that there is only absolute relativism, but rather that researchers must be critical of the values and interpretations stemming from their social situatedness.

2.5 Deconstructing Discourse

Deconstructing discourse in political science is productive for understanding language as political. Hansen (2006:17) argues that because the nature of language is productive and constitutive, "policy discourse is seen as relying upon particular constructions of problems and subjectivities, but that it is also through discourse that these problems and subjectivities are constructed in the first place". This is important to keep in mind when deconstructing representations of gender in the SAF policy discourse. It is not enough to simply add gender and focus on women as marginalized, it is necessary to unpack the existing political assumptions and identity constructions that are implicated in the institution, as well as the discourses that have a powerful institutional base and evolve around the division of masculinity and femininity (Hansen 2010:23).

The research has a methodological point of departure in a deconstructive perspective. The concept of deconstruction is most famously linked to French social theorist Jacques Derrida and his well-known *Of Grammatology*, where he introduced deconstruction to the poststructuralist movement. Herein, discourse – as text - is analyzed in order to make visible what is there, as well as what is absent, silenced or implicit. Deconstructing text highlights the juxtapositions and dichotomies in the discourse (Leavy 2007:228; Hughes 2002:18). Kronsell (2006) suggests that it is possible to study gender in institutions of hegemonic masculinity by deconstructing the discourse found in documents and narratives emerging from those institutions. More specifically, Kronsell asserts that it is possible to study 'the silences' in the material, because the silence on gender is a central trait of those institutions. The silences imply that there is no discussion on hegemonic masculinity, because it is simply common-sense and a naturalized part of the institution, reinforced by way of its everyday practices. By deconstructing the silences, one can question what seems natural in institutions, make visible gender relations, as well as taken-for-granted discursive dichotomies such as women/men,

private/public and peace/war (Kronsell 2006:109-110). Thus, the idea of studying silences is that of deconstructing normalization. The silences within a text show a relation of power, where the discursive formations decide what is relevant and what is not, in a particular context. Thus, they are not merely the absence of something, but the silences in themselves have a meaning. In this particular case, it relates to the implied natural identities of men and women and of the soldier as embodying particular types of masculinity. To critically engage with subject positions means opening up for recognizing that particular discourses silence and exclude certain imaginaries of identity construction (Hansen 2010:24). Representations of identity “are never merely descriptive, but always normative and, as such, exclusionary” (Butler as cited in Shepherd 2008:24).

However, it should be recognized that the silences on gender have been partly reconfigured through the SAF’s dedication to implementing UNSCR 1325 and a gender-perspective in its practices. The silences have, perhaps ironically, become less apparent. The slight changes in discourse that have taken place since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in the international arena, and more specifically in the Swedish context, means that it has had effects on social reality because “changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed” and reproduced (Jørgensen and Philips 2002:9). In the process of change, discourses and silences on gender take on reconfigured forms, of which its meanings and implications must be investigated. Therefore, it is necessary to continue critical engagement and deconstruct meanings in both of what is said, and what is not.

Deconstruction does not claim to unpack texts in order to uncover any truth in the author’s intentions. Rather, it is helpful in exposing the ideological core of a text, the suppressed conflicts, and multiple meanings within it. Texts and acts are ultimately bound by the limits of their ideology. With the help of deconstruction it is possible to see how a text reveals particular versions of reality and what, sometimes hidden, assumptions underlie it. Finding oppositions in texts can highlight ideological and political processes at work, while disrupting dichotomies and opening up for spaces in between (Martin, 1990; Kelemen and Ruemens, 2008). Martin (1990:355) proposes several analytical strategies to be applied in deconstruction. Joining deconstruction with feminist theory, it is shown that the strategies can be productive as a feminist methodology and thus suitable for this study. While the deconstructive strategies could perhaps be most fruitfully used as a whole, Martin speaks of them as each being a “different type of deconstructive move” (ibid.: 340). My interpretation is that the strategies must not necessarily be used together. As such, three of Martin’s strategies have been selected because they are among the most productive and commonly used

deconstructive moves within feminist research (Feldman, 1995). This indicates that they are active and established strategies, suitable for the feminist deconstructive agenda this thesis adheres to. The following strategies are used;

1. *Revealing dichotomies in the discourse (public/private, man/woman etc.)*
2. *Examining silences - what is not said or implied (who or what is excluded)*
3. *Disruptions and contradictions; places where the text fails to make sense or does not continue*

To practically apply the strategies above, they have been rearticulated into the questions below. The questions are workable illustrations of the different features that the strategies seek to find answers in the documents. The questions guide the deconstructive strategies but they have not each been applied in every single discursive theme presented in the analysis. Rather, the questions have been posed to the documents as a whole and from there, themes have emerged around one or several of the questions.

- *How are women and men being represented?*
- *What dichotomies or categorizations are present?*
- *What is silenced / not spoken of?*
- *What meanings are implicit?*
- *Who or what is the normal/norm?*
- *Are there any discontinuities or contradictions within or between the texts?*
- *What social consequences could there be?*

The value of asking these questions is to problematize discourse through the use of deconstructive strategies, rather than making truth claims. The strategies and their specified questions relate to the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. The research questions emphasize the need for investigating discursive constructions and representations of men and women in the texts, as it emerges from an institution long dominated by norms of masculinity. By utilizing the strategies, it becomes possible to pinpoint existing discourses and their possible implications. Finally, the theoretical framework does not provide a total picture of all possible aspects found within the discourses. Gendered representations are highlighted particularly, along with their contradictions and implications.

By deconstructing discourse surrounding gender in the documents, I join the critical perspectives which put focus on how the notion of gender can be seen differently, and where there is an understanding of power as implicated in the very production of its meaning.

Engaging with a deconstructive approach does not entail the claim that the documents, or the efforts of the armed forces and the Swedish government to achieve gender equality and adopting a gender-perspective, are too weak, problematic or inadequate for the continuation of these efforts. Rather, it is important to critically engage with them, to show that they are sites of discursive struggles and power relations both constituted by, and constitutive of, social reality. Policy documents are important to reflect upon as they structure societal life, implicating notions that are value-laden. To echo the words of Foucault, “[m]y point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous [...] If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (as quoted in Adams St. Pierre 2000:484). Discourse produces real power structures, hierarchies, and categories that we must always be aware of. Social reality, in this sense, is always political (Shepherd 2008:22).

2.6 Material

The primary material used are official documents accessible through the SAF or government’s website. These include the Swedish government’s national action plans to implement UNSCR 1325 from 2006 and 2011, the SAF’s Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration - *Handlingsplan för jämställdhetsintegrering i Försvarsmakten 2014 (-2019)*, and the SAF’s Steering policy document - *Försvarsmaktens Styrdokument för jämställdhet och jämlikhet 2012-2014*. The documents have been chosen because they constitute the centerpiece of the SAF’s gender equality agenda. The NAPs are included, despite being produced by the government rather than SAF, because all national and international operations are to be planned, carried out, and followed-up with consideration to this document (Försvarsmakten 2012a). The latest version of the armed force’s military-strategic doctrine – *Militärstrategisk Doktrin* – is utilized because it serves as a guide for the actions of the SAF. It also acts as a common set of principles for the entire organization. The chosen documents demonstrate the official discourse and the organization’s point of departure for gender-related work. The documents are available mainly in Swedish and have thus been subjected to my translation, though only direct quotes have been translated. Other documents and information, that can be found on the SAF’s website, and which relate to the primary documents and their subsequent initiatives, have also been used. The documents were read several times with the main research questions, and the abovementioned questions articulated for the deconstructive strategies, in mind. Several discursive themes emerged and gave indication to the dominant discourses relating to gender in the SAF.

Furthermore, it should be noted that while much of the official documents are easily accessible through either the SAF's or the Government's websites, it is difficult to know how well the official discourse in policy documents correspond with the discourses on the ground, in the daily practices of working within the SAF. The official discourse found in policy documents can be assumed to act as guiding principles that steer the organization's efforts. However, it has been shown that the military is an institution long dominated by conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. These have certainly been constitutive in creating longstanding an organizational culture that values masculine ideals. Consequently, there is a risk that the discourses in official documents are much more discreet and cautious than the discourses on the ground, as the documents serve as a projection of the image that the SAF, and the Swedish governmental offices, wants to portray to Swedish society and the rest of the world.

2.7 Limitations

This study is limited to the SAF and relies on a small number of texts. This both sets limits and presents possibilities to what can be done given the theoretical and methodological approach. While the inclusion of more texts could possibly call for an analysis with a wider historical frame, deconstructing a smaller number of texts has allowed for thorough application of the methodological tools. Moreover, to investigate the case from a wider historical perspective would invariably demand a researcher with much more time at their disposal. It would make it possible to place more focus on the historical contingency of discourses and trace their changes, disruptions and contradictions over time. However, despite discourses being contextual and historically dependent, the currently accepted version of reality, its norms, and power relations are what motivate this study. Furthermore, the chosen theoretical and methodological approaches have some inherent limitations regarding generalizability and reliability, that do not correspond with more positivist ways of seeing and doing social science. It is therefore quite possible that others may interpret the material differently, though this is not necessarily a weakness in a poststructuralist sense. The aim is not to present the 'true' version of reality or the 'true' interpretation of a text, but rather to uncover multiple meanings and contradictions within it. While the purpose is not to generalize or compare with the efforts in other nations, there is a possibility that findings may be extended to other contexts, because certain discourses can be widely spread and take on similar forms in other places.

It should be noted that the purpose is not to evaluate Sweden's or the SAF's implementation of the National Action Plan or Resolution 1325. Evaluative research requires

a wide understanding and investigation of all aspects within the policies, as well as making judgment on its worth and merit. It also requires a set of benchmarks against which its merit is evaluated. To articulate any type of 'objective' standards is not productive for a poststructuralist agenda.

Moreover, conducting interviews alongside a deconstructive approach to the discourse could present an added layer of analysis. This may give an indication of the correspondence between official discourse, and the discourses and lived experiences, of those on the ground. However, as the purpose is to deconstruct discourses that are closely connected to initiatives taken on the international level, and changes that stem from the decision-making level of the SAF, focusing on official documents is most suitable. Furthermore, while recognizing that identities are multiple and fluid, this thesis has chosen to focus specifically on representations of gender. This means that other markers of identity, which gender invariably intersects with, has been largely left out of the study. An intersectional approach would likely present a very interesting and productive interpretation of the case. Nevertheless, that would entail a much wider range of perspectives that does not fit the focus of this study.

3. UNSCR 1325 and the Transformation of the Swedish Armed Forces

In order to understand the current discourse on gender in the Swedish Armed Forces, this section moves on to present a brief historical and contextual background. First, it provides an overview of UNSCR 1325, as it is central to Sweden's and the SAF's recent work on gender. It then moves on to introduce some contemporary historical developments in the SAF and women's role within the organization.

3.1 UNSCR 1325

On October 31 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which is a legally binding document for all states that are signatories of the UN Charter (Shepherd 2011:505). It was a landmark resolution as it marked the first instance where the UN addressed the particular impact of war on women. It recognized women as significant resources in conflict management, conflict resolution and peace building. Civil society, mostly in the form of women's groups, had actively mobilized and exercised pressure within the UN-system for the purpose of achieving greater gender equality. The adoption of UNSCR 1325 was seen by many as a great leap forward and illuminated the shift away from the focus on traditional state security, towards the broader focus on human security (de Jonge Oudraat 2013:612). Since then, the resolution has been complemented and followed by several other resolutions, most importantly UNSCR 1820, which deals specifically with sexual violence as a weapon in warfare. This resolution further underscores the particular vulnerability of women and girls in armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2008).

UNSCR 1325 stresses the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, peace building and in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies. It emphasizes the importance of women's "equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security" (United Nations 2015). At the core of UNSCR 1325 are ideas of gender balancing and gender mainstreaming. The former puts focus on equal rights and has a quantitative aspect, wanting to balance the number of women and men in international peace and security missions. The latter involves recognizing large-scale integration of gender as crucial to international peace and security. It also includes understanding the impact of policies and programs on men and women respectively. Through these ideas, effectiveness is to be improved and lasting peace achieved

(de Jonge Oudraat 2013:613).

Efforts for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on both international and national levels have been made since its adoption, though in many ways they have been uneven and less than straightforward. An increasing number of countries have formulated National Action Plans but implementation has been challenging due to several factors. Inability of policy-makers to recognize its importance and inadequate political will, planning and funding are among them. Focus on short-term results and entrenched societal structures also play part in some of the meager outcomes (de Jonge Oudraat 2013:615).

3.2 The SAF and women historically

Sweden was among the first countries to commit to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 when it adopted its first National Action Plan in 2006. In 2009, a revised NAP was approved for a three-year period and was later extended to cover three additional years. The new action plan integrated considerations of UNSCR 1820. The NAP establishes Sweden's commitment to UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820, along with its ambition to being a lead advocate for worldwide implementation (Regeringskansliet 2006; Regeringskansliet 2009). While the NAP involves various governmental institutions, organizations and research institutes, the SAF is central to Sweden's implementation (Egnell et al. 2012). The NAP is fundamental for the SAF's gender efforts, for guiding the organization in articulating policy documents, and for the development of practices both nationally and internationally. Significant efforts by the SAF to integrate UNSCR 1325 and to systematically apply a gender-perspective include gender coaching, the appointment of gender advisors and conducting gender-sensitive training throughout the whole organization (Kronsell 2012:139-141; Egnell et al 2012). Since the start of implementing 1325, gender has also moved from being an issue of internal equality, to a view of gender as adding effectiveness in military operations, particularly in international missions (Egnell et al. 2012:19,25).

The SAF has gone through considerable organizational changes in recent years, as it has moved from a conscription army to a professional army. Sweden's neutrality policy during the 20th century has, in the 21st century, developed towards an internationalist agenda, protecting peace, democracy, and human rights beyond its national borders. For the Swedish defense this has meant increased focus on human security, involvement in international peace missions and integrating a gender-perspective both internally, and as a part of its international missions. The SAF's agenda plays an important part in portraying the image of Sweden as a democratic, peaceful and gender-progressive nation (Bergman 2013:327-328). Nevertheless,

despite Sweden's peaceful non-alignment policy during the 20th century, the armed forces were neither pacifist, nor entirely separated from militarism and nationalism. The SAF was created as a territorially based national defense with strong links to gendered practices of nation-building and particular constructions of hegemonic masculinity (Kronsell 2012:71, 144; Åselius 2005). In the 1900's, a gendered citizenship took form and two national identities were constructed. Compulsory conscription for all male Swedish citizens took part in institutionalizing different roles and expectations concerning men and women. Men were defined as the 'neutral soldiers' with the duty to defend and protect the nation, while women were those to be protected. Women were the 'mothers' and the 'beautiful souls' with tasks associated with the private sphere, far away from military practices (Kronsell 2012).

As noted, the SAF was long an arena exclusively for male citizens. In fact, it was the very last sphere where a male monopoly and the subsequent exclusion of women, was supported by law (Sundevall, 2011). The Swedish law on universal conscription, *allmän värnplikt*, that was active during the 1900's and in the early 2000's, was in reality far from universal. It bestowed upon all male citizens, but not female citizens, a duty to protect the nation. The law long operated as a confirmation of the military as a sphere of male dominance and competency (ibid.). Later on, resulting from increased societal debates on gender equality, and a lack of *manpower* within the military establishment, the debate on women in the military took off and intensified during the latter half of the 20th century. The inclusion of women into certain parts of the workforce – first initiated to release more male officers for combat positions - gradually developed from a practical solution to being an issue of gender equality in the workforce (Persson 2010a:147). A proposition by the Swedish government to the parliament, adopted in 1978, put forward the suggestion that;

[...] in principle gives women the possibility to obtain employment as officers within the military defense on the same conditions as men. Women who are to be employed as professional officers are presumed to voluntarily undergo training that is equivalent to the basic training male officer candidates get through conscription (Prop. 1977/78:185; 1, my translation, italics not in original)²

While the proposition opened up only a small number of non-combat positions to women, it

² Prop. 1977/78:185, pg. 1 "På grundval av betänkandet (SOU 1977/26) Kvinnan och försvarets yrken från beredningen för det försatta arbetet om kvinnan i försvaret läggs i propositionen fram förslag som i princip ger kvinnor möjlighet att få anställning som befäl inom det militära försvaret på samma villkor som män. Kvinnor som skall anställas som yrkesbefäl förutsätts frivilligt genomgå utbildning som motsvarar den grundutbildning som manliga befälsaspiranter får genom värnplikten. Reformen kommer att genomföras stegvis."

was a step towards gradually allowing more space for women to take part in the organization. The arguments against women's inclusion, and later primarily against women in combat-positions, largely centered on biological and mental differences. These were invoked to argue for the lesser capability and suitability of women in combat. Women's reproductive responsibilities were an important part in this, as opponents referred to the risk of pre-natal damage to unborn children if pregnant women were allowed in combat-positions. It also involved the practical difficulties of having to find new tasks in the organization for expecting mothers. Other opposing arguments at the time pointed to the costly practicalities of accommodating both sexes, such as having to arrange separate shower rooms (Sundevall 2011:161). The governmental proposition above clearly shows how biological differences between women and men acted as a cornerstone for the separation between the sexes in the military, and how it has historically been ingrained into the organizational culture. For example, by referring to an *aeromedical* perspective, the government concluded the proposition by stating that it would be questionable to place women in positions as pilots involved in combat, though other "physically less demanding" positions in the air force's *peace* organization could be suitable (ibid; 18, my translation)³.

In 1989, women were formally allowed to enter all parts of the SAF, though some restrictions lasted until 1994. Conscription was compulsory for all Swedish men until 2010, when it became both gender-neutral and inactive during peacetime, following a parliamentary decision the previous year. Today, the Armed Forces have a voluntary system where men and women apply on an equal basis (Försvarsmakten 2015a). The organization has in recent years made efforts to attract more women in order to achieve a more gender-balanced workforce. Women's participation in international peace missions is also seen as a prerequisite for attaining gender equality, democracy and human rights (Persson 2010a:148). Despite its efforts, the results of female recruitment have so far been quite meager, with women representing around 13 percent of the workforce. Among officers only 5,5 percent are women, while women constitutes 38 percent of the civilian workforce (Försvarsmakten 2015b).

³ Prop. 1977/78:185, pg. 18 "Beredningen har inte funnit anledning att i denna etapp närmare utreda förutsättningarna för att anställa kvinnor som flygförare vid jakt-, attack- eller spaningsflygdivisionerna eftersom dessa har primärt stridande uppgifter. Frågan har dock belysts från ett flygmedicinskt synpunkt och det har därvid bedömts vara tveksamt att placera kvinnor som flygförare i taktisk flygtjänst. [...] I flygvapnets fredsorganisation finns flygförare också placerade vid transport-, helikopter- och målflygdivisionerna. För denna fysiskt minde krävande flygtjänst finns inte samma flygmedicinska spärrar som för taktisk flygtjänst."

4. Deconstructing discourse in the Swedish Armed Forces

The following chapter applies the theoretical and methodological framework on central SAF documents. A number of discursive themes are presented, and they illustrate several discursive impediments for the transformative potential of gender in the armed forces. Both the external and internal efforts of the SAF, in a broad sense, are considered here because they intertwine and can provide an accumulated examination on the construction of gender. The discursive themes presented below are not separate from each other but intersect and overlap. Firstly, the concept of gender and operational effectiveness is discussed. It is a central idea to the armed forces work on 1325 and gender equality, where it frames gender as a strategic tool adapted for achieving effective military missions. The idea has been articulated to suit a traditional military approach and adapted to the organizational culture. When treating gender as a strategic tool, it overlooks the new forms of power relations that it creates. The discourse of women as separate and complementary to men, thus providing different skills and competencies, is touched upon and related to the idea of increasing effectiveness of military operations. These discursive themes, along with portraying women as vulnerable, treating gender as a woman's issue, and quantifying the integration of women into the SAF, denies women agency and reinforces the separation between men and women into hierarchical groups, where men and masculinity continue to comprise the silent norm. Finally, the link between gender, the cosmopolitan military, and portraying the Swedish image, is debated. Conveying the image of Sweden and the SAF as gender equal, seems central for the continuation of Sweden's self-narrative as the 'world's conscience', which risks creating a discourse of a moral hierarchy between 'ethical Sweden' and the 'unenlightened others'.

4.1 Gender as a tool for operational effectiveness

The first theme concerns the discourse of gender as a tool for operational effectiveness. It is central to what has become known as the 'Swedish Model', and regards the SAF's work on implementing a gender-perspective in its operations. The concept is also treated as important for the overall discursive construction of women's role in the military. Angervall's (2005:36) study on gender equality work within Swedish organizations/institutions highlights that gender and gender equality is not uncommonly used as an instrument to enhance an organization's effectiveness and profitability. It is regularly invoked to gain publicity and to establish an organizational image as ethical, equal and flexible. In this sense, gender becomes a strategic tool for the purpose of legitimizing organizational interests rather than drawing

attention to the unequal conditions between men and women. The use of gender as instrumental can be clearly observed in the SAF's practices. As mentioned in the previous chapter (*see 3.2*), bringing women into the armed forces during the 20th century had to a large extent to do with the organization experiencing a lack of *manpower* (Persson 2010a; Sundevall 2011). Thus, from the very beginning women were brought into the organization, at least partly, in order to supply the armed forces with personnel. The focus was then less on the unequal conditions of men and women and more on organizational interests.

Today, there is a large focus on the effectiveness that integrating UNSCR 1325 and a particular gender-perspective brings to operations. Operational effectiveness relates primarily to international missions, where a gender-perspective is applied from the initial planning stages onwards (Försvarsmakten 2013). The Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration in the Swedish Armed Forces 2014 (-2019) has three main focus areas that relate to the integration of a gender-perspective. Apart from a "rights perspective" and a "utility perspective"⁴, there is an "operational effectiveness perspective". This perspective emphasizes, for example, that through the participation of women and mixed groups in mission, information can be collected from local men and women for the purpose of security analysis, which consequently enhances the effectiveness of operations (*ibid.*). In the 2009 NAP, it is stated that one of the main goals of the Swedish government is to achieve "a considerably larger proportion of women to participate in international peace-support and security-building operations [...] and operations to be implemented with a gender perspective to increase their effectiveness" (Regeringskansliet 2009). The SAF's current military-strategic doctrine raises gender as "an example of effect-based thinking" and how this, along with 1325 and 1820, is both a strategic tool and an end in itself to improve the effect of military operations (Försvarsmakten 2011). While both men and women are included in this, there is particular focus on how the female populations should be addressed in order to obtain better information and intelligence. The military-strategic doctrine implicitly states that placing female soldiers in tactical units in a "unique way offers the opportunity to be exposed to the female population" (*ibid.*, my translation). Thus, it invites a language of women, or individuals in general, being spoken of in economic terms as 'un-tapped resources' to be 'used' for military purposes, as opposed to subjects with rights. It reinforces the essentialized conception

⁴ A rights perspective; "Ett rättighetsperspektiv med koppling till Sveriges jämställdhetspolitiska mål och mänskliga rättigheter [...]" and a utility perspective; "ett nyttoperspektiv – en attraktiv och trovärdig arbetsgivare når nya målgrupper [...]"

where biological characteristics significantly influence the subjectivity of the individual (Otto 2014:108).

This becomes even more tangible as it is stated in the Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration that the organization has begun analyzing the effects of women's participation in missions (Försvarsmakten 2013). One may question why the organization has a need to evaluate the effect of women in their operations, but not the effect of men's participation. Clearly, there is an implicit agreement that male soldiers are self-evidently suitable for military missions, while female soldiers are not. This palpable silence on men's role in military operations makes the masculine, male norm apparent. Such a naturalized link between men and soldiering is symptomatic of an institution of hegemonic masculinity (Kronsell 2006). The analysis concerning women's participation also reveals a continued resistance towards female soldiers within the organization, and suggests that there may still be a considerable part of the organization that has not come to terms with women stepping out of their traditional civilian roles to take space in traditionally masculine spheres. Additionally, the SAF express in the documents a need for more diversity within the organization and a necessity to work with increased inclusion and acceptance. Explicitly it is stated that the armed forces must focus on extending the perception of who is to be perceived as being "a part of the team" (Försvarsmakten 2013). As such, this illustrates not only resistance towards the inclusion of those who have not traditionally been actors in the SAF, but also recognition that women are not currently an accepted part of the team. Women in the armed forces clearly still constitute a stranger within. To evaluate women as a group indicates that there is an expressed need for 'proof' that women can in fact be soldiers, and that utilizing women as soldiers can have a positive impact on missions. Thus, the discourse frames women as a coherent group whose effects can be evaluated in order to measure the added value they bring to the organization, similar to any material equipment or strategic plan that can be scrapped or changed as needed. This comes across as a way of seeing reality where effects are measurable 'facts' that can objectively describe women's participation. Similarly, Shepherd (2008:120) in her extensive deconstruction of UNSCR 1325, discusses how the resolution constructs gender as a variable, rather than seeing it as a power relation or a discursive performance. She argues that 1325 frames gender as an analytical tool that can be measured, controlled and manipulated. By doing this, it uses gender as something that can be aggregated and used to put forth quantitative data on the experiences of a particular gender identity in conflict.

The focus on gender as an instrument for achieving operational effectiveness was indeed a strategic and conscious decision by the SAF for organizational purposes. Egnell et al.

(2012:9) points out that the main reason for unsuccessful organizational change can often be explained through inadequate consideration taken to the organizational culture. In order to adapt to the organizational culture, gender is conceptualized an *operational* concept that is aligned with military doctrine and theory. As an operational concept, it has been separated from both women's rights in a general sense and the internal efforts for gender equality, because of the strong organizational bias against these matters (ibid.:18-19, 25). The logic behind adopting gender as a concept of operational effectiveness, lies in that it fits well into a traditional military approach, where the military principles of effectiveness is embraced. Rather than seeing gender as something that could help transform our very understanding of conflict and security, it is being used as a tactical tool to realize established objectives and to provide added value to prevailing military approaches for strategic investigation and planning. By framing gender as an instrumental aspect, that will help realize the organization's military objectives, the SAF can mitigate the internal resistance. The armed forces were aware that other, more 'ambitious', efforts would likely face strong opposition within the organization (Egnell et al. 2012). Thus, the expectations are that once the initial resistance towards a focus on gender has been overcome, attitudes will gradually change (ibid.:72). This way, gender is regarded as more likely to be accepted, and it is more likely that the desirable success of integrating UNSCR 1325 will be achieved. At the same time, it can help reinforce the image of Sweden as a gender equal country.

While not neglecting the successes that can come from the consideration of organizational culture and the possible processes of change in the way people relate to gender this may bring, there is clearly another, more problematic dimension. The potential challenge that a gender-perspective can pose towards the existing power structures, and the institutional procedures and preferences, deteriorates when it is strictly confined within the already established framework of the SAF. Thus, the traditional way of seeing and doing conflict and security still holds strong, and the transformative potential of a gender-perspective is weakened. As suggested by Egnell et al. (2012:14), a transformative agenda should instead deconstruct the connection between masculinity and war, primarily by disputing the 'warrior culture' of the SAF. Through the discourses adopted by the SAF, the underlying power relations and hierarchical formations remains largely unaddressed because "[t]his problem is not ameliorated through an appeal to the category of women for merely 'strategic' purposes, for strategies always have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they are intended" (Butler 1999:8).

True (2010:198) argues, in regards to the mainstreaming of gender equality in institutional practices, that the use of gender as a strategic tool adopted through gender-training, checklists and toolkits, risks overlooking the overall picture of how gendered power works discursively to fortify inequalities by employing a ‘ticking-the-box’ approach. This is related to the liberal strategy, which seeks to integrate women and gender in already established practices, relying on specialists to drive the process of change in policy and programming forward. While some of these aspects may be necessary for operationalizing change in a large institution, the transformative potential risks being lost if checklists and bureaucrats are given considerable space. The approach of gender-advisors and checklists, such as *Gender Smart*⁵ (Försvarsmakten, Rekryteringsmyndigheten & Försvarshögskolan 2010), can be found in the armed forces method to gender integration. The SAF seems to apply an agenda where it selectively engages with feminist ideas, but only as far as they can serve institutional aims. A poststructuralist deconstructive approach, such as this, instead puts focus on how the diffusion of gender into strategic language, and framing women as a resource to be used for organizational purposes, creates new forms of power relations and hierarchies (True 2010:189-190).

4.2 Separate and complimentary

By and large, the SAF uses a gender-neutral discourse in its policy documents, referring to the individual’s needs and the right for anyone not to be discriminated against on grounds of gender, ethnicity, age or other markers of identity. This is illustrated in the SAF’s Steering document for Equality and Gender Equality 2012-2014 (hereinafter the Steering document), where it is stated that every individual should be assessed on the basis of their personal properties rather than stereotypical characteristics assigned to groups. Furthermore, in recognizing that it is a powerful institution that affects societal norms, the SAF regards it as important to be an organization with employees that “reflect the Swedish society” (Försvarsmakten 2012a, my translation). A will to portray the organization’s complexity in order to reconfigure the stereotypical image of the armed forces is similarly expressed (ibid.), which constitutes a positive step towards recognizing the (gendered) norms that dominate the SAF. However, while often neutral in its discourse, instances occur throughout when the documents show much less awareness of the discursive complexity in gendered representations. For example, a view of men and women as two groups, that are separate from

⁵ “GENUS SMART” involves a number of aspects to be taken into consideration before, during and after military training and interventions.

each other, but the same within, is portrayed in the military-strategic doctrine. The document is central to defining how the organization should function. It is also essential to outlining the interplay between Sweden's political and military goals and in defining the SAF's fundamental views on conflict and security policy. The military-strategic doctrine states that;

to integrate gender entails that, at every single occasion, take into consideration and deal with the fact that women and men to a high degree live different lives, often have different experiences and needs, as well as are physically located in different places in different contexts. This means that both the group women, and the group men, needs to be dealt with from common and separate aspects within the frame of all military operations (Försvarsmakten 2011:115, my translation)⁶.

The excerpt clearly illustrates a discourse that relies on a dichotomous view of women and men. Considering the constitutive effects of discourse and language as a series of juxtapositions, discussed in chapter two, it portrays women and men as two coherent groups while leaving little space for differences within or across these collectives. Identities are simply given on the basis of group belonging and contradict the previously stated will to go beyond stereotypical group characteristics and look at the individual. As such, it continues the classification of men and women into 'either-or' categories where one is invariably privileged over the other (Derrida 1976; Feldman 1995). The example also illustrates how fundamental the social ordering of individuals a set of dichotomous categories is, as the differences needs to be dealt with in *all* military operations. Thus, it seems that at no point does gender cease to matter and at no point can the individual take prominence over his/her gender identity. The argument here is not to deny the importance of recognizing the difficulties that women do indeed face in conflict situations, but to emphasize the importance given to gender-identities in all situations, with no reference to the individual in their own right as parted from the gendered collective.

Furthermore, a theme emerges in the discourse, where women are depicted as having characteristics that are both different from, and serve as a complement to, the characteristics of men. The complementary nature of women was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis as one of the main arguments for the effectiveness of including women into

⁶ "Att integrera gender innebär att man vid varje enskilt tillfälle tar hänsyn till och hanterar det faktum att kvinnor och män i hög grad lever olika liv, ofta har olika erfarenheter och behov samt fysiskt befinner sig på olika platser och i olika sammanhang. Detta innebär att såväl gruppen kvinnor som gruppen män måste hanteras både utifrån gemensamma och separata aspekter inom ramen för all militär verksamhet."

international peace missions, albeit highly controversial among feminist scholars. Similar to Persson (2010a:160), this thesis argues that if women's feminine qualities are brought forward and are implicitly given value in relation to how well they serve as a *complement* to men's masculine qualities, existing gendered power structures within the institution end up being sedimented and legitimized. The view of women as embodying characteristics and skills different from those of men, and regarding them as complementary, is clearly underlined by a dichotomous reasoning. Even though the characteristics and skills brought forward are praised and positively regarded within the organization, it constructs women and men, feminine and masculine, as two separate poles. It is certainly likely that the utilization of a wide range of competencies and qualities from all sexes will lead to a well-functioning and effective organization. And in this regard, the SAF has made considerable steps towards becoming more balanced and open-minded than it has been historically. Nevertheless, the utilization of different competencies and skills can, at a closer look, also be problematic when it relies on stereotypical, dichotomous conceptualizations. Such conceptualizations are part of the very groundwork in the gender hierarchy and which constitutes a fundamental ordering of all social life (Weedon 1987:75-76). Moreover, a particular norm can be observed. When feminine characteristics are seen as a complement to masculine qualities, it implicitly states that particular masculine qualities are the normal, because they are the ones to be 'complemented'. It seems quite contradictory to the way gender is defined by the armed forces in their document *Concepts and definitions*. There, it is described as a social construct that is "created by actions and ideas about femininity and masculinity in society. Gender has nothing to do with biological sex"⁷ (Försvarsmakten 2012b). Further on in the document, it is recognized that norms control our thoughts and actions, and that norms are interconnected with relations of power. Heteronormativity is defined as a dominating norm that has its starting point in expectations about femininity and masculinity being oppositional and complementary (ibid.).

Still, women are discussed as needed *especially* in international missions (Regeringskansliet 2006; 2009), partly in order to carry out certain tasks that male soldiers may not be able to, such as searching or patting down local women. Female soldiers are furthermore regarded as an asset to the operations because they, simply by being women, are indirectly assumed to easier gain access to the local female population (Försvarsmakten 2011:115). Implicitly, this seems to be based on the presumption that female soldiers are seen

⁷ "Genus är det sociala könet som skapas av handlingar och föreställningar om kvinnlighet och manlighet i samhället. Genus har inget att göra med det biologiska könet"

as less intimidating to local populations and can communicate with local women, a stereotypical argument for the inclusion of female soldiers. This, in turn, has links to the stereotypical views of women as more ‘gentle’ ‘caring’ and ‘communicative’, but also the fact that women are less likely to be perpetrators of violence. Persson’s (2010a:159) study of UNSCR 1325 implementation in the SAF shows how female soldiers are seen as a complement to their male counterparts. They are allocated a very particular and well-defined function in their units. The tasks for female soldiers, as specified by UNSCR 1325, can be carried out by a small number of individuals. This means that one woman in each unit may be ‘enough’ to fulfill the requirements of the resolution. This reasoning could mean that only a small number of women in the SAF’s missions are needed to achieve operational effectiveness and for the organization to become more gender equal. Women and their presumed ‘feminine’ qualities, while seen as a positive and necessary, do not challenge or go beyond the separation between the sexes. Women are rather being integrated as a group, still separated from the larger male collective. The fact that soldiers are told during training to “make use of the female soldier”⁸, illustrate a type of “integration through separation” (Persson 2010a:159, my translation). Herein it becomes obvious that women are *female* soldiers, as opposed to simply soldiers like their male counterparts. The underlying assumption is essentialist and relies on the division between men and women. One officer in Persson’s study expressed that “[w]e need more girls as officers. But not girls who try to be guys, we need girls because it will be better then, different”⁹ (ibid:157, my translation). In other words, the SAF does not want ‘girls’ who ‘try’ to adopt, or have, traditionally masculine traits – assuming that masculinity can only be naturally embodied by men. Instead, they want girls with stereotypical feminine features that can serve as a complement to the male soldiers and counterbalance their masculinity. The inclusion of women is highlighted to be for the sake of the mission and without this *resource* – that is, the female soldiers gaining information and intelligence from local women – they cannot complete their tasks. A lecturer on Resolution 1325 spoke about the problem of not having any women in the units, “[a]t home with young guys this is not a problem ... but now when we go out [on mission], we need women that can meet and interact with women on-site”¹⁰ (ibid.:158, my translation). Thus, female soldiers are emphasized as not necessarily needed in the domestic context, but crucial

⁸ ”Använd den kvinnliga soldaten”

⁹ ”Vi behöver fler tjejer som officerare. Men inte tjejer som försöker vara som killar, utan vi behöver tjejer för att det blir bättre då, annorlunda”

¹⁰ ”Hemma med unga grabbar är det här inget problem ... men nu när vi ska ut måste vi ha kvinnor som kan möta och samverka med kvinnor på plats”

in the international domain. This is implicitly stating that women are to be utilized as a specific strategic tool needed in particular contexts, but can be disregarded in others. Hence, the issue at hand does not have to do with gender equality, but simply with achieving the most *effective* military missions.

This line of reasoning can be connected to the liberal principle of sameness, where the concept of ‘same but different’ becomes problematic when women are used for stereotypical skills and qualities in order to add operational effectiveness. It disregards the fact that individuals are judged according to an underlying male norm where certain masculine characteristics and skills are hegemonic and in juxtaposition with the feminine ‘Other’ (Kronsell 2006). Critically engaging with gender as an analytical category allows for an understanding of gender that can challenge the reproduction of essentialized difference, instead of accepting and presuming difference, and have that as a starting point (Shepherd 2008:50). The female soldier can thus be highly valued for her feminine qualities, while at the same time this does little to overthrow the binary relationship. Rather, it risks reinforcing differences and creating new divisions between men and women in the armed forces. As such, it could end up institutionalizing the role of men as war-making soldiers and women as peaceful caregivers, and at the same time, reinforce the status ascribed to these roles (DeGroot 2001:32).

4.3 Quantifying women’s bodies

We now return to the quantitative perspective of including women into the military, as touched upon in the first section of this chapter. Such an approach is present in the discourse of the SAF and relates to the critique of the liberal perspective, where the integration of women into existing institutional practices, and amendments of legal rights, is considered to provide gender equality. A specific goal stated in the SAF’s Steering document is to considerably increase the number of women and to have them be represented throughout the entire organization. The Swedish NAP specifies that an aim is to have *equal participation* of men and women in civilian peace- and security missions, while in military peace- and security operations there is to be *participation on equal terms* (Regeringskansliet 2009). While it is important to recognize that the armed forces struggle in recruiting women, that they do not have an equal amount of women and men in military positions, and that women are largely employed as civilians in the SAF, it is still interesting to note that the goals are different depending on if they encompass the civilian or the military workforce. For military operations, the aim is not to have equal participation, but rather that once women and men are

in these positions, they should be treated equally. Connections can be drawn to the historical link between women and their assumed role within the private sphere, that women are assumed to be (vulnerable) civilians, while men are positioned in the public sphere with links to military practices as the ‘protectors’ of the nation.

The approach of quantifying women’s inclusion is not necessarily a negative thing; an institution of hegemonic masculinity has been created as such partly due to the longstanding numerical dominance of men within the organization. Thus, quantifying women’s inclusion can serve an important purpose for achieving gender equality and contesting male norms. Integrating women – the other pole in a binary relationship – is productive for making gendered norms and normalized practices visible (Kronsell 2006; 2012). However, simply integrating a set number of women does not necessarily change the underlying norms that structure an institution of hegemonic masculinity. If norms that privilege stereotypical ideas of what men and women are and should be, prevails, a larger number of women do not automatically mean that those women will have the same access to power, space to articulate their thoughts, and be able to exercise their agency on par with male colleagues (Shepherd 2008:117-118). Simply put, quantifying women does not necessarily entail a qualitative outcome.

Moreover, an interesting assumption that relates to the quantitative aspect of incorporating women into the armed forces can be found in the Steering document for gender equality. Herein it is stated that an equal division between male and female employees will make the organization effective and that “harassment and other discrimination rarely occurs in environments with a wide composition of employees”¹¹ (Försvarsmakten 2012a, 2013, my translation). Though women are not referred to specifically, it is clear that women, simply by their numerical presence, are assumed to cure the ill of harassment. Women’s bodies in this statement are implicitly converted into a tool that can be used to out-balance the unwanted harassment that individuals within the organization are experiencing. By focusing on the individual, attention is diverted away from a possible need to change underlying institutional norms and structures that may sanction this type of behavior. Consequently, the organization can instead point finger at the individual and (her) responsibility to mitigate harassment. By covertly referring to the incorporation of female bodies, women are allocated an active and responsible role in the project, while men are already there as an inactive party, dominating the organization. Through this, the individual is assigned responsibility for gender equal

¹¹ “Trakasserier och annan diskriminering förekommer sällan i miljöer med en bred personalsammansättning”

treatment, and focus is put on the actions and active part of the individual to achieve the goal of equality. At the same time though, it also becomes clear that the individual is constituted in the collective terrain and is assigned collective identities that are dependent on group belonging, here specifically gender (Hansen 2006:6, 18). Thus, it can be argued that women, both as a collective and as individuals, are given primary responsibility for creating a work-environment where they are free from unwanted harassment. This can then be related to the assumption of women's pacifying effect on male comrades, as discussed in chapter one, where women, as a group and individually, are implicitly given responsibility for male sexual behaviors.

4.4 Protecting the vulnerable woman

The next theme that emerges from the documents is the discourse of women as vulnerable and in dire need of protection. This particular representation of women as defenseless and weak compared to men, is crucial for the social ordering of the gender hierarchy. It is clearly illustrated in the Swedish NAP as the second version takes into consideration Resolution 1820, because it puts further focus on the "protection aspect of Resolution 1325" (Regeringskansliet 2009). The NAP highlights in relation to 1820 the particular vulnerability of women in armed conflict, and by protecting women and girls, "not least against sexual violence", more women will be able to take an active part in peace- and conflict prevention efforts (ibid.). Herein, the NAP raises a widespread harm that many women, girls, boys and men suffer from and this is an important characteristic of war that should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, it is also doubled-edged in its meaning. The wording that women and girls should be protected "not least against sexual violence" is ambiguous and in need of unpacking. It seemingly refers to the fact that women and girls should be protected from a range of evils, and while sexual violence is the most important, it is only one of many. Such words implicitly positions women and girls as vulnerable to so many factors, while not explaining in detail how far these dangers of life may stretch.

Furthermore, the discourse of a 'protection aspect' in relation to women and girls only, leaves out the existence of male victims in such gendered violence. When victims and perpetrators are defined in this narrow sense, victims become 'feminized' because of their connection with the 'weak woman'. Ignoring male victims perpetuates a particular stigmatization and 'feminization' of those men who have been subjected to harm (Otto 2009:24). Moreover, positioning women and girls as the ones who should be protected from the sexual violence of male perpetrators, illustrates an implicit dichotomy between the

'helpless woman' and the 'violent male', along with the need of a 'peaceful protector'. Coupling women together with girls also means that they are associated with the vulnerability of the child, who is not fully mature and thus not entirely capable of rational thought and action (Shepherd 2008:42). The association between women and children is problematic not only because women are constructed as immature, but also because they become depicted as in constant need of protection from their 'own' or the 'other' men. This is part of a discourse that perpetuates age-old assumptions on the vulnerability of, and the need to protect, 'women-and-children' (Carpenter 2006). The discourse becomes revitalized through this particular representation of women, with their bodies depicted as sexualized and powerless in the onslaught of violence. Thus, when women are defined through their vulnerability, they are not regarded as having any control of their own lives. This delimits their agency and their possibilities to play important roles in political processes and decision-making (Puechguirbal 2010:161). It also implicitly reinforces beliefs based on biological differences, where women's unequal position is due to her helplessness towards the weapon that is naturally inherent in the male body (ibid.).

The protection aspect is found throughout the NAP as one of its three main areas of focus, which is centered on "[t]he protection of women and girls in conflict situations to be strengthened [...]" (Regeringskansliet 2009). For women to have agency, and to be able to participate in political processes, it seems as if they are dependent on the efforts of the 'peaceful protector', here embodied by the SAF. The armed forces have a duty to safeguard vulnerable women because they cannot shield themselves, and their role is to think and act strategically in their best interest (Enloe 2007:61). While an important aspect to give light to, these particular representations risk weakening the emancipatory project found in other parts of the discourse, where women are increasingly spoken of as having agency and the possibility of making important contributions to international peace and security.

Apart from the dichotomy between the 'protector' and 'protected', the discourse presents another problem if viewed from a feminist deconstructive agenda, as a postcolonial aspect can be related to the 'peaceful protector'. The vulnerable woman in the discourse of the Swedish NAP and the SAF's documents is implicitly referred to as a woman in a far-away (third-world) land, which Swedish troops need to protect from the barbarism of the local context. It presents a binary that relies not only on gender, but also on race and cultural dominance, where the white westerners are protecting the 'brown woman' from the 'brown man'. To have women participating in international peace missions is important because they embody the democratic values of the international community, and they are a source for inspiration and

empowerment for local women. Pratt (2013:776) argues, when investigating Resolution 1325 and peacekeeping, that this type of discourse reinforces racial and gendered hierarchies, wherein the western troops come to ‘rescue’ and ‘enlighten’ the ‘barbarians’ of the third-world.

In a more general sense, the ‘protection aspect’ can also be found in other parts of the documents. “Men’s violence against women” is discussed on several occasions as part of a global objective to secure human security out on mission, and it is discussed as closely related to domestic violence (Försvarsmakten 2013). The power in this discourse is discursively attributed to men, who have the ‘power over’ women though their violence against them (Shepherd 2008:44). The Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration deliberates in relation to this on the difficulty of knowing how far the SAF’s mandate stretch into the lives of local populations, making the human security agenda complex. It is also articulated as an internal goal of the SAF, where their zero-tolerance for harassment is part of their battle to end men’s violence against women (Försvarsmakten 2013). Once again, men are mentioned only as the perpetrators of violence and women are only portrayed as victims. No possibilities for alternative roles are presented. This conceptualization constructs ideas on what it is to be a man or a woman. Male bodies are linked to action, aggressiveness and authority, whereas women’s bodies are connected to passivity, peacefulness and subjugation (Shepherd 2008:40). From the outset it appears to be all about disarming the dangerous men with weapons in order to protect the exposed women and children, and once this is done, peace can pervade (True 2010:199). This perpetuates the already widespread construction of women as only victims, with very little agency to be otherwise. When women are conceptualized as such, men explicitly become the holders of power (ibid.). Peace and security is thus defined in a masculinist environment and with reference to masculine norms, which in turn renders women’s needs, interests and agency peripheral (Puechguirbal 2010:163). But the construction of women as civilian victims not only denies them agency, but also continues the feminization of peace and reinforces stereotypes of women as naturally more peaceful, caring and nurturing compared to men (True 2010:199). Consequently, it is crucial to go beyond the discourse of protector vs. protected, because it victimizes, rather than recognizes women as actors with agency and rights. In the long run, it offers little critical reflection on gendered assumptions, and it is important to note that gender hegemonies are controlled by the socially constructed meanings in discourses, which have effects on the conceptions actors have of themselves and their perceived interests (ibid.:197). As such, subjectivity is not fixed; it

comes into being through the repetitive discursive performance of gender relations, where individuals end up internalizing and normalizing the discursive gender differences.

4.5 Gender - A woman's issue

The integration of a gender-perspective and achieving gender equality is expressed as issues that need considerable attention in the military establishment. However, when unpacking the SAF's discourse, gender appears to be synonymously used with women, thus producing a discourse of gender as a 'woman's issue'. Throughout, women (and girls) are continuously spoken of in relation to gender and gender equality. Women are mentioned frequently as a group in their own right, and sometimes along the lines of 'women and men'. But while 'gender' is supposed to encompass all types of gender-identities, men are very rarely mentioned in relation to gender. In fact, men are much less frequently mentioned at all in the armed forces documents that concern the integration of UNSCR 1325 and gender equality. When men are mentioned separately, they are simply encouraged to take paternity leave (Försvarsmakten 2012a); as if this is the only way they can take an active part in creating a gender equal organization. In short, men have no gender – only women do (Butler 1999:26). Men are the natural, the norm, and the inherently self-evident feature of an institution of hegemonic masculinity. Though not worded explicitly, this use of discourse positions gender as something that has to do with women, or simply put – a 'woman's issue'. One may wonder then whether all other issues in the military are implicitly considered 'men's issues'?

The Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration reveals yet another example of how women is used synonymously with gender in the armed forces. Herein it is affirmed that women feel uncomfortable being put in the limelight because of their gender, as opposed to their personal competencies (Försvarsmakten 2013). It indicates that the work on gender primarily revolves around women. It becomes more about 'fixing' the 'woman's issue' rather than being something that is relevant for everyone or recognizing the underlying male norms that is embedded in the organizational culture. While the focus on women is positive in many regards, it is a view of gender that has considerably less transformative potential than if it involved everyone. Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that while gender seems to be synonymous with women, the Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration does mention on a few occasions that the experiences of women and men, boys and girls should all be taken into consideration (Försvarsmakten 2012a). This is a development by the SAF towards a more inclusive discourse, as opposed to the government's two NAPs that make no such mentioning (Regeringskansliet 2006; 2009).

The discourse of gender as a woman's issue can be developed further. For example, there are efforts within the armed forces that seek to provide a good collective working-environment for women, and the possibility of sharing experiences with other women. The SAF's Steering document speaks of networking events for women and that these should be arranged both locally and centrally (Försvarsmakten 2012a). There is also a specific network for women employed by the armed forces, called Network Officer/Employed Woman (NOAK)¹². In a male-dominated organization where norms of masculinity are prevalent, this can surely in many ways provide a good venue for women to share their experiences and seek support from others who may share similar experiences. Though these initiatives can also be problematic. There is a risk in assuming that women have a need to establish a *female* occupational identity and to be a part of a particular *female* collective. Rather than creating a good atmosphere for all employees, this approach could have an adverse effect by way of contributing to the continued separation and alienation of *female* soldiers from the rest of the organization. The discourse further illuminates women as a minority that is clearly delineated from the larger collectivity. Thus, it becomes another case of simultaneously integrating while separating. It sets clear bounds as to who and what is the norm within the organization. This, in turn, may entail a consolidation and reinforcement of the differences between women and men, as they are separated along stereotypical lines (Persson 2010a:160; Kronsell 2006:112).

Another example of a discourse that both separates female soldiers from the larger collectivity, and indicates a trivialization of their competency, is illustrated in other official SAF outlets. For example, "Search Girls" is a group of female soldiers from the SAF and other national militaries in Camp Marmal in Afghanistan, who has the function of patting down female visitors to the camp. They are depicted in the entry "Search girls increases security"¹³ in the *Afghanistan blog*, an official armed forces blog. While it is not clear how the group was named, it shows yet another questionable use of language emerging from an official communication channel. In the entry, 'women' is used to speak of female visitors or women in a general sense. But when the specific group of soldiers is brought up, they are either referred to as 'search girls' or the Swedish word 'tjejer' (Försvarsmakten 2014b, my translation), which can be translated into 'girls' or 'chicks'. The word 'girls' indicate a connection between women and children, which, as discussed previously, signifies a reduction of the women's capacity of rational thought and action. The word 'chick' can be similarly linked to an immature individual, as it is slang for a young woman. Speaking of

¹² NOAK: Nätverk Officer/Anställd Kvinna

¹³ "Search girls ökar säkerheten"

gender and gender equality in a way that minimize its importance or belittles women as a group, by referring to them as ‘girls’ or ‘chicks’, can reinforce the power relations that position men above women in the institutional hierarchy. It may also reinforce the idea that gender is a minor issue that only concerns women.

Furthermore, the SAF’s Action Plan for Gender Equality Integration states that the organizational structure “affect the possibility of working with a number of ‘softer’ areas, such as gender equality”¹⁴ (Försvarsmakten 2013, my translation). The quotation marks around the word *softer* could indicate that there is some disagreement as to whether it can be used to rightfully describe gender equality. Though its use also indicates that, despite the ambiguity of the term, it is a common reference to invoke when speaking of gender equality in the organization. Further in the document, it is stated that gender equality is regarded as a soft subject matter, which has to do with the thousands of years of “disciplining effective soldiers”¹⁵ (Ibid., my translation). So, despite being aware of this problematic conceptualization of the word, it is still being used. Thus, the ‘softer’ issues of gender equality are then pitted against ‘harder’ issues that have traditionally belonged in the military. In this relationship there are invariable connections between ‘soft’ issues, the private sphere, and women. The discourse reinforces the binary relationship where the ‘softer’ gender equality can easily be downgraded to give space to ‘harder’, more important issues. The document brings up the problem that ‘softer’ issues are experienced in the organization as being sidelined. It reports how gender equality is experienced as being placed outside the core military issues, and something that is being reduced in importance, despite the management’s clear directives to focus on gender equality (ibid.). This seems symptomatic of an institution of hegemonic masculinity, where a deeply embedded culture favors ‘hard’, ‘masculine’ matters, and where there is an accepted usage of words such as ‘soft’ in relation to gender equality (Andersson 2010). It further feeds into the discourse of gender equality being a ‘woman’s issue’ because of the connection between the woman, and ‘soft’ issues that have traditionally been seen to belong to the private sphere.

Yet another ambiguous expression concerns the discussion on structural challenges for achieving gender equality in the military establishment. It is stated that while the gender-specialists in the SAF avoids speaking of structural challenges as problems, the SAF has been advised by the government to “describe the fundamental root of the ‘problem’ that gender

¹⁴ “...påverkar möjligheten att arbeta med ett flertal ”mjukare” områden, såsom jämställdhet.”

¹⁵ “Jämställdhet uppfattas som en ‘mjuk’ fråga och som går stick i stäv med tusenåriga traditioner av fostran av effektiva soldater.”

integration needs to address”¹⁶ (Försvarsmakten 2013, my translation). Here is another interesting choice of quotation marks that can be interpreted in at least two ways. When deconstructing its meaning, the word is read in relation to the previous statement that gender-specialists do not wish to speak of structural challenges to gender equality as a *problem*. In this way, a wish to draw particular attention to the word, and hesitation to using the word in this manner, becomes illuminated. The specific use of quotation marks indicates that the word *problem* has a different meaning, perhaps with an ironic undertone¹⁷. Of course, it may also be so that the word is used to simply emphasize the name, or the specific wording, that has been given by the government in its instructions to the SAF. Nevertheless, avoiding to speak of structural issues as a problem seems to an attempt to draw attention away from the norms of masculinity that has historically characterized the organization. It could be an attempt to downplay the significance this have had, and still has, for the organization and its culture. Interestingly, the Steering document expresses that the equality efforts of the armed forces puts focus on the “structural and organizational obstructions that impede the work for increased [equality]”¹⁸ (Försvarsmakten 2012a, my translation). This, on the other hand, sounds very much like a description of a problem, and thus contradicts the statement above. Though regardless of any original intentions by the authors in this articulation, it is important to recognize that language always constitutes contradictions and multiple meanings. Recognizing this is an essential step towards revealing underlying norms and its implications in an institution of hegemonic masculinity. The ambiguous expressions debated are particularly interesting as the armed forces has reached a realization of how people’s perceptions are vital for the organization’s credibility, and also how discourse influence perceptions (Försvarsmakten 2014a). The military-strategic doctrine asserts that all communication must have a starting point in the organization’s basic value principles, because anything that is expressed in speech, writing, imagery, or through action, affects the credibility of the organization (Försvarsmakten 2011:116).

4.6 Portraying the Swedish image

As noted in previous chapters, Sweden has long been regarded as a peaceful and gender-equal nation. It is known for having fairly open borders, and a track record of respecting human

¹⁶ “... blivit rådd att med ord beskriva grundorsaken till ”problemet” som jämställdhetsintegreringen behöver åtgärda.”

¹⁷ The use of quotation marks, specifically single quotation marks, can be used to question the meaning of a word (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2015).

¹⁸ “... fokuserar på de strukturella och organisatoriska hinder som försvårar arbetet för en ökad jämställdhet och jämlikhet.”

rights and democratic principles. While some argue that Sweden's independent voice was much stronger in the past, before the "Europeanisation of Swedish foreign policy" (Hansen 2009:22), it is still regarded as a significant moral actor in the international community (Bergman-Rosamond 2013:333; Kronsell 2012:72). As such, Sweden has a certain image that, if to be upheld, should be reflected at home and abroad. The Swedish image has been extended over recent years, when in a globalized world, human security have been embraced and cosmopolitan moral obligations beyond national borders are increasingly recognized. The cosmopolitan character can be identified through peacekeeping operations, where the SAF constitutes an important actor in portraying the Swedish image. The SAF's image and efforts must therefore correspond with the self-narrative of Sweden as a moral superpower, with commitments to justice and equality for those outside the Swedish nation (Bergman 2007). Kronsell (2012) argues that the 'post-national' military in Sweden, while understood as an institution of hegemonic masculinity, has seen a 'new masculinity' take form. This masculinity supports ideas of equality, is more caring, and thus challenges some traditional ideas about the masculine soldier. The increased diversity in the armed forces has a role in this process, as the hierarchical separation of the 'self' and the 'other' along ethnic, gendered or other lines are blurred, when those very features are present in the construction of the soldier-'self' (Whitworth 2004:162-169). Surely, these are regarded as positive developments from a feminist perspective, which sees the military as inherently implicated with war making which is in turn fundamentally gendered. Though questions can also be raised when looking closer at the link between the SAF, gender and the portrayal of the Swedish image as a significant moral actor.

As previously mentioned, organizations can use gender as a strategic tool to depict an image as ethical and equal, in order to achieve organizational aims. The military is implicated in the larger Swedish image, which both the organization and Sweden as a whole has an interest in maintaining. The Swedish NAP clearly articulates a goal to be a leading nation that drives the work with Resolution 1325 forward, both nationally and in the international community. Sweden is to continue inspiring and influencing other countries via regional and global organizations, in order to push national implementations forward. Though it also recognizes that Sweden can only be one of many actors that hold a shared responsibility of 1325. The NAP is clear that issues regarding implementation of 1325 should be a priority for Sweden (Regeringskansliet 2009). Furthermore, the SAF speak of achieving gender equality as a way to communicate an image of the organization as a fair and attractive employer. It is one of the five main areas where the organization sees a need for improvement, recognizing

that the working conditions within the organization is still, to a large extent, more adapted for men and their life situations (Försvarsmakten 2013:10).

It becomes evident throughout that the armed forces regard the work on gender as different depending on whether it is to be adopted within the national or international context. The Steering document and the NAP articulate the need for the inclusion of women as a much more pressing matter when Sweden engages militarily in the international context, than it is in the national. This can be interpreted in several ways. One such interpretation relates to the specific image of Sweden as an open, equal and gender-progressive nation, an image that it wishes to convey to the rest of the world. Putting increased focus on, and placing a disproportionate amount of, women in international missions can uphold this idea. Surely, it would be much more difficult to call Sweden an equal and gender-progressive nation, which puts focus on the integration of Resolution 1325, if women are not seen representing the country to the outside world. In this regard, Swedish women have agency, while Swedish men and women are perhaps sent out to ‘inspire’ others in achieving gender equality. One may wonder whether the need for women in the international context, rather than the national, is particularly emphasized because there is an underlying assumption that Sweden is already sufficiently gender-equal and gender-aware. Is there a belief that the need for integrating a gender-perspective and achieving gender equality is already met at home, and they can instead devote time to help the unequal others?

The NAP explicitly states that *women’s skills* are to be utilized in SAF’s international commitments (Regeringskansliet 2009:11). The emphasis on women as needed in international missions is particularly interesting in relation to conceptualizing the SAF as a cosmopolitan-minded military engaged with peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is often conceptualized as civilian-typed work, which in turn is seen as ‘feminine’ work, outside the ‘masculine’ core of military practices (Persson 2010b). This is linked to the stereotypical conceptualizations of women as belonging to the civilian sphere and being naturally more peaceful. As mentioned, women are sometimes regarded as a resource because of their assumed communicative, or other special, skills in gathering intelligence from local civilians. Their skills are therefore particularly suited for international missions, where their feminine (peaceful) traits can out-balance the (violent) masculinity of male soldiers or male locals. As such, women’s assumed skills are to be utilized in order to bring legitimacy and effectiveness to missions abroad. Once again, the *strategic* aspects of the organization’s objectives are evident.

Maintaining the image of Sweden can be further linked to realizing organizational aims. Being a respected member of the international community and a moral voice that others listen to reaps benefits for Sweden as a whole. Sweden's involvement in the international community, particularly in the UN, has historically been legitimized "by its status as a neutral state, its absence of colonial history, and its relations with developing countries" (Kronsell 2012:72). And so, the operational effectiveness-perspective can be conceived to revolve not only around specific missions, but also around the effectiveness of the image that it portrays to the rest of the world. Taking men, women, boys and girls into consideration, along with deploying more women in missions, is 'proof' of Sweden's equality-image and its implementation of 1325. It sends a strong message and could perhaps even be a channel of influence internationally. But is this part of a tactic, a strategic goal of the armed forces to preserve the Swedish self-narrative, to assert Swedish moral superiority and a position as a normative power?¹⁹ The discursive pledge to support human rights, gender equality and international peace in a cosmopolitan fashion (Bergman 2007), may very well be a good message, but it also reveals an essentialist assumption about the globally shared morality in all human beings. Human rights are not rooted in any universal truth. Rather, human security and rights, which the cosmopolitan military seeks to defend, are in fact implicated with context and history. Human rights and security are not derived from 'pure reason' or a 'law of nature' and they make no sense outside the hegemonic discourses of the context (Hutchings, 2004). In no way do I want to argue that intervention and military support in contexts where humanitarian disasters are imminent should be abolished, and neither that agendas for human rights are bad. What I am arguing is that it all operates within a context, like a form of governance, where the liberal state is preserving itself through spreading the current common-sense discursive 'truths' of the (western) world. Because as previously noted, truth is conceptualized as necessarily connected to power.

An idea in cosmopolitan thinking is that of consent and open communication, of protecting those marginalized and vulnerable. This approach is indeed positive, but one must also be aware that all relations are relations of power, where the hegemonic discourses dominate the very possibility of how things can be thought of and spoken of. To simply frame missions abroad as *objective* or *neutral*, and for the good of others, is to overlook the power that it involves. Bergman-Rosamond (2011:70) argues, in relation to the Swedish mission in Afghanistan, that human security and individual rights are essential to constructing

¹⁹ For discussions on the concept of 'Normative Power Europe' see for example, Manners, 2002; Whitman, 2011 and Brommesson, 2010

Afghanistan as “the needy other”. When constructing others as ‘needy’ and ‘weak’, Sweden becomes the ‘savior’ and thus constructs a moral hierarchy. This risks becoming a universalizing project with normative underpinnings that quells difference and lends legitimacy to hegemonic western discourses, subsequently reinforcing dominant values and practices (Elliott and Cheeseman 2002:7).

Clearly, the use of discourse is not innocent or neutral and is productive in the very construction of reality. The image of Sweden as a gender-progressive nation, that takes its moral obligations towards distant others seriously, is seemingly important for Sweden’s self-narrative and stand out in the efforts discussed here. Upholding this image can lead to many well-intentioned endeavors and have a positive impact on people’s lives, but this does not mean that the discourse is entirely unproblematic. It seems to comprise elements of self-righteousness, where stereotypes are played upon and internal impediments to gender equality are, to a large extent, discarded in the light of having to save the unenlightened, distant others.

5. Concluding Discussion

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the discourses on gender and their implications for the way gender is conceptualized in the SAF. In sum, the analysis presented a number of interlocking discursive themes that were identified in the written documents. These were, *gender as a tool for operational effectiveness*, *women as separate and complementary*, *quantifying women's bodies*, *protecting the vulnerable woman*, *gender as a woman's issue*, and *portraying the image of Sweden*. Through the theoretical framework and the deconstructive strategies, the discursive themes were found to have several problematic aspects. The previous chapter argued that the discourses reinforce the problematic divisions between women and men, where gender is reconstituted as a biological attribute. It is problematic because dichotomies are hierarchical, which means that the divisions revitalize power relations where men are valued over women. In an institution of hegemonic masculinity, the unequal relations of power have been institutionalized and, as such, deeply embedded into the organizational culture. By adopting a discourse of gender that fits into the military culture, gender becomes a problem-solving tool, rather than acting as an analytical aspect. In this way, the gender-perspective loses some of its transformative potential. Moreover, when gender is equated with women and constructed as a 'woman's issue', gender equality seems to concern only women and the importance of the gender-perspective is diminished. At the same time, when women are discursively made into vulnerable subjects, associated with defenselessness, irrationality, and child-like immaturity, women are denied agency and their emancipatory possibilities are weakened.

The implications of the identified discursive themes may be multiple. The risk is that gender will continue to be viewed as something that is peripheral in military operations, and can be disregarded with the onset of other 'hard' issues that have traditionally belonged to the military sphere. In other words, gender will be secondary and utilized in traditionally military models, rather than used as a way to transform the way conflict and security is understood. This study has shown that the SAF's gender approach takes into consideration the organizational culture in order to reduce the 'radical' aspects of a gender-perspective and diminish resistance towards change. But if significant consideration is taken to the organizational culture, and if the individual is at the same time given primary responsibility for gender equality, the implications may be that the institution can mitigate its own responsibility and put less effort into making structural changes. The existing power structures prevail because a gender-perspective is simply added to the existing structures,

rather than offering large-scale transformation. Because of a fear that using gender in a more radical way would likely both challenge the institutional hierarchy and spur subsequent resistance, this adaptation is supported. This only goes to show just how deeply embedded the norms really are. Furthermore, when women and men keep being separated along socially constructed lines, and when women are given specific roles on the basis of their difference, they are less likely to become an accepted part of the organization. Instead, women and men are defined as two separate groups with different roles, measured against the prevailing norm of masculinity. There seems to be little thought given to the implications of separating women from the larger male collective. At the same time, the prevalence of a male norm is to some extent recognized as problematic by the organization, but there is also indication towards a mitigation of its significance. The institutionalization of norms of masculinity can thus continue, with the norms remaining silent, unquestioned and reproduced.

Cosmopolitan-minded militaries have also been discussed. It cannot be denied that peacekeeping, cosmopolitan ideals and militaries are paradoxical. They involve the deployment of trained soldiers from traditionally masculine institutions to enforce peace through military means. Though this does not leave out the possibility of this contradictory function developing towards a diversified, different type of military organization where alternative masculinities and femininities can prevail. With time and more research, we will know more about what this means for the gendered characteristics of militaries, peace and war. But so far, the core militarist idea of the armed forces to “defend the country and repel the aggressor” (Försvarsmakten 2015c) if subjected to an attack, generally remains, despite internationalist inclinations.

I would like to point out, once again, that my aim with this thesis has not been to discredit any of the efforts by the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish government, the United Nations or any other actor with a well-intentioned agenda. Rather, I have sought to challenge the discourse and create awareness of its multiple meanings and contradictions, by way of adding to the existing literature and debates to push it forward. There has been tremendous work from both the international community and Sweden, with its armed forces as a front figure. This work has led to many positive developments in achieving gender equality, for acknowledging women as political actors, and towards recognizing the gendered dimension of conflict and security. Though having come far, these are still issues that need analytical reflection. We must critically engage with discourses because they are neither innocent nor neutral. They are constitutive in the construction of reality and have real effects on people’s lives. We need also to be aware of the interlocking relationship between discourse and power.

As such, I encourage further research on the meanings and implications of militaries being engaged with articulating gender-policies and in carrying out various gender-programs. These are highly contested issues for feminist research, as feminist pacifism meets feminist arguments for the right to be equally included in all public life, including military practices. Research on constructions of gender in military organizations, and its implications for the hierarchical separation of men and women, is also encouraged. Moreover, additional investigation regarding the correspondence between official discourses and discourses ‘on the ground’, among those employed in the SAF, and other military organizations, would surely cast additional light on the effects of discourses and how well discourse trickle down in an institution of hegemonic masculinity. This could help us towards a better understanding of how deeply entrenched norms have been in military institutions, as well as in the societal context at large.

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