President Obama signs S.614 in the Oval Office. The bill awards a Congressional Gold Medal to Women Airforce Service Pilots.
Inclusive Security
NATO Adapts and Adopts

BY SWANEE HUNT AND DOUGLAS LUTE

We met for the first time in Pristina. Both of us had labored to mitigate conflict in the Balkans, and we had great hopes when the Dayton Agreement was signed in 1995, ending the civil war in Bosnia. But only four years later, the limits of the agreement became clear. General Wesley Clark, a principal figure in the negotiations that ended the violence in Bosnia, led NATO in a bombing campaign against the regime of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic (later charged with war crimes), whose army was behind escalating violence against civilians in Kosovo. We had already seen how Milosevic’s tactics played out in Bosnia.

Swanee Hunt: I’d been involved in the Balkans since 1993, when I became U.S. Ambassador to nearby Austria, hosting Bosnian negotiations in 1994 that led to a Muslim-Croat Federation. After half a dozen trips in Yugoslavia, I was starting to get a sense of the place.

Douglas Lute: I had worked on the Joint Staff for Wes Clark during the Dayton negotiations and later during implementation of the agreement when 60,000 NATO soldiers were committed to keep the peace in Bosnia. In May 2002, I arrived in Kosovo’s capital Pristina, three years after NATO’s bombing campaign to halt the humanitarian crisis there, to command 15,000 U.S. and Allied troops under the NATO flag. Kosovo was struggling to find its feet, still divided deeply with fresh memories of ethnic violence. Our military mission was halfway between conflict and peace.

Swanee Hunt: In 2002, American diplomats in Pristina asked if I would co-lead a two-day workshop with a brave Kosovar visionary, Vjosa Dobruna. My main contribution was to bring

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examples of countries worldwide where women's political advancement was having a positive impact on society.

**Douglas Lute:** I can’t remember exactly how I ended up in that meeting with Swanee. It may have been a welcome break from the daily routine of trying to keep track of the tensions in the southeastern quarter of Kosovo and working with the emerging Kosovar political and security institutions.

**Swanee Hunt:** Doug and I got together for an early breakfast at whatever hotel was hosting internationals like me. He listened with appreciated patience as I explained my improbable notion. In fact, he must have thought I was a little weak in the head, because everyone believed that for cultural reasons—and because they wouldn't win—Kosovar women wouldn't run for public office.

**Douglas Lute:** I was intrigued by this maverick of a diplomat, enough that I asked several of our female officers to sit in on the seminar she was leading to encourage local women to run for office. It would probably be a good professional experience for them and they would set a good example to the Kosovars.

**Swanee Hunt:** As it turned out, interactions like these were the beginning of a new understanding of the disproportionate impact war has on women and the impact empowering women could have on NATO's efforts to build and sustain peace.

**NATO's Evolution: Operational Necessity**

Old film footage from 1949 shows a large roomful of men in dark suits, with nary an exception: no women were at the table when 12 founding states signed the Washington Treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. This year, when NATO leaders representing 28 countries gather for the Warsaw Summit, half a dozen women heads of government will be at the table with a score of female ministers behind them, including six women who serve as their respective countries' ministers of defense. This is a sign of progress, but not enough to declare victory on the goal of true gender equity.

Shift the scene to another piece of history captured on camera just outside Paris in 1951 at the dedication of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE. The uniformed commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, spoke deliberately and clearly: “In all history, this is the first time that an allied headquarters has been set up in peace, to preserve the peace, and not to wage war.” Reflecting on his comment today, we realize that NATO's values have not changed: NATO is an Alliance of democracies with the goal of fostering peace, even as NATO troops have fought and died in two different theaters over the past 20 years. But while the mission remains the same, NATO has evolved in important ways, and operational experience has taught us vital lessons about how to preserve peace more effectively. Choosing the right partners and ensuring they can operate successfully together are fundamental. To do that, we have learned that we must stretch our thinking and get beyond biases.

From the original group of 12, the Alliance has grown to include 28 member
states and more than 40 formal partner countries. The varied contributions of every one of those countries are needed; national diversity has proven to be a strength. In recent years, NATO officials have recognized, however, that politically and militarily we have consistently drawn from less than half our available talent. For that and many other reasons, the Alliance’s Women, Peace, and Security action plan was created to reduce the barriers to women’s full participation in NATO decisionmaking and involve them in all policymaking, activities, and operations.

Why? Very simply, the inclusion of women has been shown to increase Alliance effectiveness in conflict management and preventing armed violence. In short, it is an operational necessity.

**Alliance’s First Operation: Understanding Women as Victims**

In December 1995, following more than three years of horrific violence, a NATO-led force (Implementation Force, or IFOR) deployed to Bosnia to implement the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement. A year later, NATO transitioned from IFOR to the Stabilization Force (SFOR), which helped maintain security and facilitate Bosnia’s reconstruction.

The bloody Balkan conflict included rape as a tactic of war. As in many wars throughout history, among massacres and other atrocities, systematic gender-based violence was employed as a strategy to intimidate and undermine enemy morale. Sexual violence used as a tool of war was now understood as not only a personal tragedy, but also a security issue—and squarely NATO’s concern. For the first time, preventing it became an element in the Alliance’s approach to conflict intervention and a focus of the military mission. Thus, one of the underlying mandates for the Alliance in its first major crisis operation was the protection of women and girls from becoming victims of sexual violence. It should come as no surprise, then, that at the outset few within NATO considered the possibility that Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian women might be powerful contributors to security. Officials at Alliance headquarters had had little opportunity to see the powerful intelligence and political courage among Balkan women. It was not until 2010 that NATO created its first position of field “gender advisor.”

**Gender Blindness**

*Swanee Hunt: But I did have the opportunity to view these remarkable women in action. With 70,000 refugees pouring across their borders, senior Austrian officials naturally expected me to explain the context to Washington. I needed accurate information and made multiple trips to the former Yugoslavia. While there, I made it a point to meet with local women—from leaders to everyday citizens. My contacts included thousands of women, and I marveled at their resilience. Repeatedly, I saw women finding ways not simply of surviving, but of reconciling and reconstructing communities.*

*In 1994, we hosted at our embassy in Vienna two weeks of negotiations, which resulted in Bosnia’s Muslim-Croat Federation, a step toward the Dayton Agreement that formally ended the war. It was only when I walked into the White House auditorium for the signing of the Federation agreement and looked out at a sea of grey-suited men that I felt ashamed*
at my own blindness. The delegations were all male.

How was that possible? Yugoslavia had the highest percentage of women holding Ph.D.’s of any country in Europe. They weren’t just scholars; they were political leaders and activists. And they were on “our side,” doing everything they could, without external support, to prevent and then stop the war. Yet despite the extraordinary feats I knew women had accomplished next door, I had failed in Vienna to notice the lack of women at the table.

Regrettably, I heard from scores of Balkan women, also absent from the talks a year later, how different their views were from those of the negotiators. Many pointed out that, with their pre-war lives intertwined, a country cut in half did not restore their home. Tanja (a Serb member of the Bosnian presidency) said: “I was against the division agreed upon at Dayton…. We have many cultures, traditions, ethnic groups. Any division was artificial.” Another, Danica (a Bosnian Croat), explained her sadness at not only being forced from her home during the war, but also at being denied safe return for years afterward: “The greatest joy is, of course, that the war stopped. But if [the goals of] Dayton had been carried out, I’d be home. Instead, I’m here [in exile], just like the day it was signed.” Women’s perspectives had been missing at Dayton where, many told me, they would have made clear the “guaranteed” right of return would be meaningless without the apprehension of war criminals. How could anyone return to

Male political leaders sign the Croat-Muslim Federation agreement at The White House in March 1994.
a village where the police chief or mayor, still in office, had overseen genocidal rapes and murders?

Not ideology, but pragmatism was the common thread that ran through their words to me. But they had been excluded—first, by their own nationalist power brokers, and then by “the internationals” who rewarded extremists with all available seats at the negotiating table. The result was not only a flawed right of return, but also a country bifurcated.

**Human Security Requires Inclusive Security**

Ironically, three months before the Dayton agreement, the UN held its September 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing. Although First Lady Hillary Clinton had been strongly cautioned against making waves (given the politically fraught U.S.-China relationship), she electrified delegates with her pointed affirmation that “…human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights, once and for all.” Now seen as a watershed in the field of women and security, the conference resulted in a strong declaration, including: “Local, national, regional, and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution, and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels.”

Simultaneously, debate was growing in diplomatic and academic circles over whether the true measure of security was the well-being of states, as it had traditionally been understood, or the well-being of individuals—“human security.” That concept was introduced by the UN Development Program’s 1994 report, with a broad definition encompassing freedom from want and freedom from fear. These ideas fueled the arguments of those who said traditional security models, by focusing on external threats to the state, ignored most of the perils faced by women (not only sexual violence, but also maternal mortality, economic deprivation, food and water insecurity, and political marginalization). Many advocates for human security also blasted unequal levels of opportunity that hinder women from fully participating in decisions on issues affecting their lives. But it was only several years later, in 2000—when the UN adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security—that it became clear the paradigm was shifting.

UNSCR 1325 calls out the disproportionate impact that modern armed conflict has on women. It also highlights that women bring new eyes to old problems because of their differing experience that can yield valuable insights for conflict prevention, stabilization, and peace maintenance. Critically, the resolution encouraged an increase in women’s participation in security operations. And, of course, it called on all nations to protect women from gender-based violence. The international community, at least rhetorically, had formally recognized that women could and should be agents of security. They are not merely victims.

**Swanee Hunt: Returning more than 20 times to the Balkans (to research two books), I was struck by the enormous chasm between what I heard about the war from international policymakers and from the people affected by it. Over time, it became clear to me that if we don’t begin**
our search for peace by incorporating the views of all segments of society—and, in particular, women as well as men—we cannot achieve true security. Around 2002, I dubbed this idea “inclusive security,” and set about analyzing and testing the theory with military fellows, scholars, government officials, and peacebuilders on the ground.

NATO’s Second Operation and a New Lesson: Military Needs for Women’s Engagement

Douglas Lute: Women in Bosnia clearly experienced conflict differently from men. Lessons learned from that deployment and the adoption of UNSCR 1325 led to NATO’s use of gender advisors and informed changes to Alliance education and training, culminating in the gender mainstreaming policy. The policy is described operationally as “a strategy for achieving gender equality by assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, and programs in all areas and at all levels, in order to assure that the concerns and experiences of women and men are taken into account in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres.”

While NATO’s progress on women’s inclusion has mirrored the political and social strides women have made around the world, at first the Alliance used gender

Lithuanian Army 1st Lt. Ruta Gaizetute meets with local villagers during a Civilian Military Cooperation Team visit in Chaghcharan, Afghanistan.
advisors only in the field, and mainly to enhance protection of women. But during NATO’s next major deployment after the Balkans, to Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 attacks, our forces became more aware of the need to tap women’s potential contributions to security.

In August 2003, NATO took the lead of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, leading—at the operation’s height—more than 140,000 troops from 51 Alliance and partner nations. The security of ISAF forces as well as the success of the mission hinged upon contact with the local population. Our mostly all-male units were handicapped early on by their inability to interact with or serve half the Afghan population.

NATO recognized that a gap existed in its force composition—that is, we lacked officers who could both serve in combat and interact with Afghan women. Security of the population required engaging the population, both men and women, even though cultural norms in the countryside created a barrier between our troops and Afghan women. Whether to interview or search women—or even to make sure that the persons beneath burqas were female—the need for women among NATO troops became obvious, and some units began coming up with creative measures to bridge the gap.

Observers point to an experiment conducted in 2009 at the request of male U.S. Marines as an early effort. Seven female Marines and a female interpreter interviewed a number of village women, gaining vital situational awareness. The news spread and, by the following year, the U.S. Army also had created female “Cultural Support Teams.” (There were certain differences, but the women’s units were often referred to by the same acronym: FETs, for Female Engagement Teams.) In short, these teams were created because of operational necessity—a demand-driven push from the field, supported by an efficiency-driven pull from the top.

Varied Missions for Women

The Institute for Inclusive Security documented how NATO came to rely on women soldiers in Afghanistan in multiple ways, often because of their access and ability to defuse tension or connect with others, male and female. When police and security forces searched Afghan men for weapons, tensions were inevitably high, but often less so when women were included in patrols.

One telling vignette of a woman soldier building personal connections occurred in Sangin, one of the most dangerous areas in Afghanistan. A female corporal assigned to an infantry unit struck up a friendly conversation with a local farmer over her enjoyment of his favorite crop—watermelons. As they talked, he decided to let her know that he had vital information. She asked if she might go and get others who would very much appreciate that information, and he agreed, but when several male colleagues returned without her, the farmer refused to say more unless his new friend was present. His information regarding roadside bombs and Taliban insurgents not only saved the lives of military personnel who
frequently patrolled the area, but also helped inform future operations.  

Commanders often sent FETs to engage and influence the community. Teams reported that the local women—including those with whom they were interacting—had a strong influence on their husbands, sons, and the community as a whole. Female troops capitalized on this social dynamic by creating solid bonds; they acted not only as role models for Afghan women, but also as information conduits to and from larger NATO units. Those successes likely paid dividends in an Afghan society of close family ties, where the influence of mothers and sisters can guide others in the community away from political and religious extremism. There are many reports of local women supporting counterinsurgency operations after having gained a better understanding of the military’s intentions through contact with NATO’s female troops.

NATO’s use of FETs in operations came to a close as NATO concluded combat operations and passed the lead for security to Afghan forces in December 2014. But by then the teams had played a major role and NATO had gained important lessons on the operational benefits of women’s inclusion. Ideally, in future conflict settings, we will move beyond Female Engagement Teams. Troops train together for a reason, and last-minute grafting on of even the most talented outside units composed of women is less effective than making certain we have the necessary diversity integrated in our formations at every level.

Today, with new security challenges along its periphery, NATO is undergoing significant adaptation, incorporating some powerful lessons learned from operations over the past 20 years. First, having the right partners serving alongside NATO forces is crucial. And second, diversity in force composition is not confined to nationality; gender is also a key component. Based on NATO’s operational experiences, there may never be a more constructive time than now to draw on the doctrine of inclusive security.

It is clear that NATO’s values—democracy, human rights, individual liberty, and the rule of law—underpin the work of integrating a gender perspective in all areas of the Alliance. That may seem an abstract philosophical choice, but research shows that countries providing extensive opportunities for women as well as men are both more peaceful and more prosperous than other nations.

The Answer is Partly Political

The reverse is also true. Researchers cite the failure to be inclusive as correlated with failed states and fallen regimes. But while there is growing acknowledgement that exclusion drives conflict, there is scant practical guidance about what meaningful inclusion looks like and how to achieve it. How can we build security forces and institutions that address the varied needs and interests of increasingly diverse populations? In short, how do we create inclusive security? As we’ve described, having women troops deployed on the ground offers operational benefits, but we also need women making policy. NATO is more than a military organization, and its political strength rests on common values, including equal rights and the strength of diversity. In both realms, military and political, the Alliance depends on representatives of its 28 member states, from military officers to political office holders. So the role of women matters, from the battlefield to the policy table.

What is the current picture for them? In 1999, women represented just over seven
percent of NATO countries’ armed forces. It took 14 years for that percentage to inch its way up to 10.6 percent. During this time, participation of female troops in NATO-led operations was only 6.7 percent. Social science experiments have shown that diverse groups are more adept at decisionmaking. And parallel research indicates that the benefits of including both genders fully kick in only when a critical mass of 30-35 percent is reached.

There is also evidence of a persistent “brass ceiling” for women in officers’ ranks as promotion numbers decline rapidly with rise in rank. However, there are some signs that this may be changing for the better. The Alliance recently appointed our first-ever female NATO Commander, Brigadier General Giselle Wilz of the U.S. Army, at NATO’s headquarters in Sarajevo. While the cadre of women in the military ranks has been growing, more women also have taken seats at the policy table. When heads of government gather at NATO, approximately 16 percent are female. Currently, women account for 21 percent of Alliance defense ministers and 7 percent of foreign ministers, making the combined total for female NATO ministers 14 percent. On average, 27 percent of the members’ parliaments are female, and the number of women in other leadership roles is increasing. So a pipeline exists, even if the current flow is sluggish.

And the Answer is Partly Policy

Fortunately, NATO realizes the need for collaboration among Allies and partners in this effort, and its Policy on Women, Peace, and Security has been developed within NATO’s 50-nation Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Five additional partners (Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates) participated in its development. The policy lays out a path for removing barriers to women’s participation in NATO’s decision-making process, and reducing conflict-related, gender-based violence. The path, otherwise known as the “Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security,” is organized around NATO’s three core tasks—collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management and operations. This body of work is led by Ambassador Marriët Schuurman as the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative (SGSR) for Women, Peace, and Security. The SGSR position was established in 2012 as a voluntary national contribution and made permanent in 2014 at the NATO Wales Summit.

One of the capstone structural changes resulting from the women, peace, and security agenda is the integration of gender advisors throughout the military and civilian structures at NATO. The importance of their work cannot be overstated. These specialized advisors are part of continuing operations in Kosovo and the current non-combat Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, as well as at SHAPE and other NATO headquarters. They report directly to commanders and help military leaders apply a gender perspective in all security matters.

Education is fundamental, and the NATO/EAPC Action Plan includes extensive training for all personnel under the Alliance umbrella, including online modules for gender training. All NATO troops who engage local populations are required to have instruction on UNSCR 1325 prior to deployment.

Of course, organizational culture, particularly military culture, is deeply rooted and difficult to change abruptly. The structural
alterations put in place by the Alliance will take time to implement fully, but we are on our way—and have come a great distance from where we began. As we look forward, these efforts will continue with the overall aim of changing the institutional culture and mindset.

National Action Plans

In 2004, the UN urged each member state to develop a policy document on women, peace, and security to make quicker progress on goals laid out in UNSCR 1325. As of late 2015, only 18 of 28 NATO Allies have developed such a plan. The United States released its National Action Plan in 2011.

At NATO, the member states work together, train together, and fight together; NATO Allies act as one. Thus, the standard for ensuring women’s inclusion ought to be the same in all areas where NATO is present: all member states need a blueprint to integrate women’s perspectives and enable their participation.

NATO’s 40 partner states, too, work to be interoperable. For those partners who are prospective members, going through the process of developing a national action plan is a step that helps to prepare countries to join the Alliance. Having and implementing a well-crafted policy document is a mark of readiness.

A Look Ahead

A year of global reflection, 2015 marked 15 years since the “No Women, No Peace” landmark UNSCR 1325 was adopted. Despite considerable progress, defining the roles of women still rests on the margins of
international peace and security agendas. But the issues surrounding their roles are not marginal; they are fundamental to making headway in solving today’s security challenges. A more systematic approach will help us develop targets, monitor implementation, measure the results, and report back to decisionmakers.

To address that need, NATO unveiled the “1325 Scorecard” last October. This new tool, developed by Women in International Security (WIIS) and the Belgrade Center for Security Policy, is designed to help Allies and partner nations measure their progress, identify gaps, and compare notes on implementation using the same metrics. Sponsored by NATO’s Emerging Security Challenges Division, the scorecard provides a systematic approach for evaluating and tracking our collective progress on implementation of UNSCR 1325. Widespread use of this innovative and very practical tool can raise awareness of UNSCR 1325 by identifying the gaps where policy is lacking and help ensure that all Allies and partners meet the NATO standard of interoperability on gender issues.

Mainstreaming the gender perspective into everything the Alliance does is an ambitious and ongoing effort. As the Alliance and its partners explore other practical ways to carry out the women, peace, and security agenda, nurturing positive initiatives and achievements is also important. A good example is a NATO Trust Fund that was set up by nations to underwrite the costs of security and defense related projects focusing on supporting the Jordanian Armed Forces’ efforts to increase recruitment and retention of women, and provide effective training on gender issues. Also, NATO endorsed military guidance on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in June 2015, which includes better direction for commanders in the field. Best practices have been developed from experiences in NATO’s operational deployments. Many partnership tools also include a gender component, including various trust funds, the Building Integrity assistance program, and research grants in NATO’s Science for Peace and Security Program. Regular staff-to-staff talks foster learning about crisis management and peacekeeping among NATO, the UN, and other international organizations.

As NATO adapts, important lessons are being incorporated. So what more can be done? “NATO is doing a lot. But we need to do more, especially when it comes to promoting equal participation within NATO itself,” said Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, NATO Deputy Secretary General, speaking recently at the UN Security Council High-Level Review of UNSCR 1325. “We need to increase active and meaningful participation of women.” In his speech, Vershbow pledged that NATO will:

■ Share best national practices and valuable lessons learned among NATO Allies and Partners on increasing female participation at decisionmaking levels within national structures.
■ Accelerate the advancement of women in NATO headquarters by establishing a Women’s Professional Network and Mentoring Program.
■ Actively encourage Allies to submit female candidates for NATO’s most senior decisionmaking positions.
■ Strengthen NATO partnerships for gender equality with other international organizations, including the UN, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union, and African Union.
■ Finance gender-sensitive research aimed at identifying drivers of radicalization and
violent extremism, and developing targeted and evidence-based responses, including the empowerment of women to safeguard communities.

- Establish a civil society advisory panel to institutionalize NATO’s positive engagement(s).

“...We face a rising tide of violent extremism and terrorism,” Vershbow said. “And it will be women, once again, who are most at risk. It is therefore essential that women be involved at every stage, and every level, of our operations and missions.”

Operationally, it is not that NATO should have more women; it is that we must. That is because we need women to increase access to citizens, build bridges between conflicting parties, and gather more and better information. We need women’s expertise and input on deployments, planning, and policy. As Allies contribute human resources to NATO, whether deploying troops to field exercises, filling headquarters billets, or advancing candidates for leadership positions, nations can advance inclusive security by putting additional well-qualified women in the mix. In sum, inclusive security should be incorporated in the military, political, and institutional adaptations of the Alliance to ensure that NATO is using all available resources to meet the security challenges of today and tomorrow. As the Alliance adapts to ever-evolving and complex threats, we cannot afford to draw from less than 100 percent of our talent pool. Diversity in all its forms is a powerful asset of NATO’s 28 democracies. Likewise, for NATO as an organization, inclusive security is more effective, efficient, and smart security.

As Ambassador Vershbow said cogently, “Diversity gives us strength. Being inclusive will allow us to achieve our common goal: lasting peace and security.”

PRISM
Notes


4 Ibid., Case Study Three, 28-29.


10 Parliamentary figures were calculated using data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.
Sudanese take part in “Citizen Hearings” in Musfa, Blue Nile State, on the border between northern and southern Sudan. The hearings were part of a 21-day process of popular consultations where residents could express whether the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) had met their expectations.