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rethinking peacekeeping, gender equality and collective security

Gina Heathcote and Dianne Otto, eds., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014, 323pp., ISBN: 978-1-137-40020-8, \$105.00 (Hbk)

Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security, a collection of essays edited by Gina Heathcote and Dianna Otto, makes a critical and refreshing contribution to feminist and legal scholarship by combining the former's analysis of gender norms with the latter's focus on practical applications. The collection, inspired by a conference on gender, peacekeeping and security in the Asia-Pacific, accomplishes this union through a selection of essays on the same topic but with a global focus. More specifically, *Rethinking Peacekeeping* examines and critiques the United Nations's Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) using a gendered and legal lens. Adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000, SCR 1325 emphasises women's critical role in negotiating peace agreements and the need to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls.¹ The editors explain that its adoption constituted a monumental achievement for feminist activists and human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These groups had long advocated for SCR 1325 because of women's marginalised roles in peacekeeping projects and the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict societies.

Rather than focussing on SCR 1325's origins, however, this collection focusses on what its provisions have 'meant in practice'. To answer this question, the collection is divided into four thematic sections: Shame, Hope, Danger and Silences. Overall, *Rethinking Peacekeeping* indicates that the resolution should be applauded for advocating for women's inclusion in peacekeeping initiatives; however, it also states that women are still largely excluded from this arena. Moreover, the essays, especially those by Chloé Lewis and Jacqui True, suggest that the resolution and its follow-up provisions have often reinforced the gendered presumption that women are victims of sexual violence and the notion that ending sexual violence should be the sole focus in peacebuilding efforts. As a result, other critical issues such as economic inequality remain unaddressed.

Yet despite SCR 1325's limitations, none of *Rethinking Peacekeeping's* contributors fail to envision its potential for creating social change. Their viewpoints on SCR 1325 are thus both appropriately critical and inspiring. For example, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls's essay from the Hope section discusses women in the Pacific Island territories who use SCR 1325 and community radio as platforms to advocate for local gender equality. Rolls is the director of a network in Fiji that oversees the community radio station. Her inclusion in this collection showcases another one of its strengths: it includes a dynamic group of contributors. In addition to essays by activist

¹See Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advance of Women (2004).

scholars like Rolls, the collection includes contributions from feminist legal scholars such as Judith Gardham and military legal official Dale Stephens.

Rethinking Peacekeeping makes an important contribution to feminist theory by challenging the resolution's monolithic definition of women. Heathcote's essay on Bougainville, an autonomous territory and island of Papua New Guinea, asserts that SCR 1325's definition of women is understood in Western-centric terms. As a result, the experiences of Bougainville women, as 'peripheral subjects', are overlooked (pp. 50, 56). Thus, even though she acknowledges that the resolution constitutes a 'hard-won feminist achievement[t]', Heathcote importantly highlights that its 'gendered assumptions' derive mostly from 'white, western and economically privileged women's experiences' (p. 50). This critique demonstrates the collection's contribution to transnational feminist literature as well, because it exposes which women—white, Western, privileged women—the resolution's drafters advertently or inadvertently had in mind.

Lewis's essay likewise critiques the gendered assumptions in SCR 1325 and its related resolutions. More specifically, she highlights that male victims of sexual violence are often overlooked within these provisions, because they construe women as victims and men as aggressors. For example, Lewis points out that SCR 1820 'refers to 'women and girls' 13 times as victims of sexual violence' (p. 208). So while Lewis acknowledges that these resolutions constitute an important gender equality achievement because they made sexual violence 'an international security concern' and an issue 'within the realm of high politics', she also states that their definitions of victim and aggressor need to be revised so that male victims' needs are considered (pp. 204, 205). Lewis correctly points out that this 'eclips[ing] of male victimhood' is indicative of gender norms in which women are presumed weak and men are presumed powerful (p. 208).

For these reasons, *Rethinking Peacekeeping* is indeed impressive. Not only does the collection unite feminist and legal analysis through its study of SCR 1325, but it also critically and generously examines the resolution as a tool to create gender equality in peacekeeping projects. One possible limitation is that the work does not consider feminist or women's rights activists who oppose SCR 1325. Adding these viewpoints would have enhanced this noteworthy feminist collection.

reference

Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advance of Women, 2004. Landmark resolution on women, peace and security. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advance of Women (OSAGI), 22 October. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/> [last accessed 20 March 2017].

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