

# Gendered military divisions

## Doing peacekeeping as part of the postnational defence

BY ALMA PERSSON

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*In the turn towards a postnational defence, military organizations are becoming increasingly diverse. Based on an ethnographic study of a Swedish international service unit, this article highlights tensions in the seemingly homogenous soldier collective and shows how demarcations of gender as well as occupation are active in shaping military work.*

**250** soldiers are lined up in perfectly square formations. From a distance, they all look the same; green camouflage uniforms, rugged boots and faces partly concealed by green caps. In a matter of days they will begin their service in an international peacekeeping operation, and together they embody what has been labelled ‘the biggest reform in modern military history’ (Swedish Ministry of Defence 2009). At the heart of this transformation from a national to a postnational defence lies the changing purpose of the Swedish military, from defending Sweden’s national borders to participating in peacekeeping operations around the world (Kronsell 2012). International missions are becoming the Swedish armed forces’ primary purpose and source of legitimacy (Ydén 2008). Within the organization, this is described as ‘the big paradigm shift’ (Persson 2011). At the same time, the interconnections of gender, conflict and security in the international

arena are taking on a new guise, following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (United Nations Security Council 2000).

Drawing upon studies of gender, military and conflict resolution studies, and feminist studies of professions and occupations, this article addresses the diversity of today's international military operations and the divisions that cut across the ostensibly homogenous soldier collective of the post-national defence. Based on an ethnographic study of a Swedish international service unit preparing for deployment, the article attends to the blurred occupational demarcations, the re-emerging gender division of labour and the uncertainties concerning the kind of soldiers they are expected to be.

The article aims to show how demarcations are drawn in the soldier collective, and how these demarcations are entangled with gender. Three research questions guide the analysis. What ideal types of soldiering do soldiers articulate and draw upon in their work? How are gender divisions rendered legitimate by the focus on peacekeeping? How do soldiers construct occupational divisions within the unit? In analysing the tensions related to gender and occupation in the military, the article focuses on three interrelated processes: the contradictory understanding of the soldier, the gendering of peacekeeping work, and the construction of occupational demarcations.

This article shows how the transition of the Swedish armed forces' into an international defence organization is perceived by those who are in the middle of it all. It shows how the increased emphasis on peacekeeping is generating new gendered boundaries, meanings and interactions in the organization. An important limitation of the study is that it does not include observations of military work after deployment. I found that observing a unit in the final steps of training would facilitate a

more flexible research process, where military practices, the soldiers' views on gender, occupation and military work, and interactions within the unit could be observed without the restrictions that come with deployment in camp. Many of the unit members have been on several missions before, meaning that their experiences from abroad have been included without having been observed first hand.

The article also needs to be situated in relation to the case studied. First, Sweden is a neutral state, and its military has been highly focused on protecting the nation's borders from armed attack: international work has only recently become the focus of attention (Ydén 2008). Another key characteristic of the Swedish case is its history of efforts to achieve gender equality and its gender mainstreaming work. This means that the study addresses issues that are still fairly new to the Swedish military (international operations), as well as issues of gender equality that have been debated for decades and where one might expect the Swedish case to be at the forefront. Thus, this makes an interesting case for understanding how soldiers in the middle of a radical redefinition of military work make sense of it in a context where gender equality is relatively firmly established on the political agenda.

#### GENDER, OCCUPATION AND PEACEKEEPING

There is a profound and enduring connection between men and the military. Many armies have been (and still are) made up exclusively of men and boys or are heavily dominated by them (Dawson 1994; Higate 2003; Kronsell 2012; Whitworth 2004). Jeff Hearn states that 'military matters are urgent and powerful; how militaries, armies and those in them are organized and act are literally matters of life and death' (Hearn 2011: 67). Peacekeeping units, he points out, are no exception.

The academic field of conflict resolution studies emerged during the Cold War era of the 1950s, alongside the practice of first-generation peacekeeping operations (Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Today, it constitutes a wide-ranging field of research bringing together scholars of, for example, international relations, political science and sociology. Like most areas of research, conflict resolution studies have been criticized for being blind to the importance of a gender perspective on either war or conflict resolution (Reimann 1999). Cynthia Cockburn (2011) argues that, when it comes to war, militarization, and the military, gender relations are an ‘intrinsic, interwoven, inescapable part of the story’. The present article draws upon the critical perspectives of more recent conflict resolution studies, where issues of gender relations in peacekeeping as well as ideas of the postmodern soldier are addressed.

There is a growing body of research that investigates and theorizes the intricate connections between gender and the military, from the gendered practices in specific military contexts to how the very ideas of nations, war, and peace can be understood as gendered phenomena (Carreiras 2006; Goldstein 2001; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012; Persson 2011). At the intersection of peace and conflict studies, gender studies, and international relations, a field of research that specifically targets the connections between gender and peacekeeping is currently forming. Focusing on the role of gender in today’s military organizations, Annica Kronsell argues that there is an important difference between the logics of national defence and the evolving ‘postnational defence’ (Kronsell 2012: 138). In Kronsell’s conceptualization, a postnational defence ‘is one that pays less attention to the defence of the territory and more to the security situation outside its borders, often in cooperation with other states’ (Kronsell 2012: 3). This

shift of attention and focus, she argues, brings with it new ways of understanding gender relations. For example, gender relations based on the dichotomy between protector and protected that were fundamental to the notion of national defence are fundamentally challenged and to some extent reshaped in the transition towards a postnational defence. The present article lends support to that argument, but also shows that the ways in which gender is understood in postnational defence is a complex and contradictory matter that is intertwined with other sets of social relations.

When peacekeeping operations are discussed, the importance of having a gender balance is often highlighted. It is argued that the success and effectiveness of an operation is improved when the proportion of women involved increases, and that women bring unique qualities to a peacekeeping operation. For example, in addition to increasing operational effectiveness, women are expected to engender trust in the foreign troops, act as role models for local women, and decrease the level of their male peers’ misconduct (Bridges and Horsfall 2009). A study of Dutch peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo (Sion 2008: 561) shows that peacekeeping was perceived by soldiers as a feminine branch of military work, a ‘blurred new reality’ where traditional gender patterns become fuzzy. Others argue that peacekeeping, like military work in general, is saturated with dominant forms of masculinity that reaffirm gender demarcations at the expense of gender mainstreaming and increased equality. For example, there is a tenacious connection between peacekeepers, men, and the sexual exploitation of local women (Higate 2007; Whitworth 2004).

A key to understanding the important and often contradictory role of gender in postnational defence is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women,

Peace and Security, which is changing the ways in which the connections between gender and peacekeeping are understood in military practices. When the resolution was first adopted in 2000, it was initially celebrated by feminist activists and gender scholars as a victory. Ten years on, it appears to be more of a rhetorical than a practical commitment, and women 'remain excluded from formal peace negotiations and [are] marginalized from the decision-making processes that reconstruct their future' (Willett 2010: 156–157). This, Willett argues, is a result of the dominant epistemology of masculinity, militarism, and war within which the idea of gender mainstreaming has been submerged. This is further complicated by the tendency to essentialize women's contributions to peacekeeping operations, thereby reinforcing a binary and complementary understanding of gender (Carreiras 2010; Valenius 2007).

As shown above, there is a well-established field of research that scrutinizes military organizations from a gender perspective. A less studied aspect of organizational diversity in postnational defence is how occupational relations are constructed and challenged in these changing military practices. Fabrizio Battistelli (1997) discusses how a shift towards a postnational (or, in his terminology, postmodern) defence in Italy has changed the ways in which soldiers understand their occupation and what motivates them to be part of the military. In this discussion, however, gender is absent. Research that focuses on the gendered character of professions and occupations starts from the view that occupations, much like gender, are constructed, changeable, and relational in character. The proper place and task of particular occupational categories in an organization is no more self-evident than the proper place and task of men and women. The very idea of 'the professional' is assigned a masculine connotation

(Kerfoot 2002). Furthermore, the 'professional project' is inherently gendered in the sense that the actors involved and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion are infused with gender (Dahle and Iversen 2001; Witz 1992). In his study of the Finnish defence forces, Teemu Tallberg (2009: 114) argues that peacekeeping units are hybrid organizations that involve 'encounters between the civilian and military spheres'. He states that the hierarchies between professional officers and reservist or civilian employees are negotiated in everyday work, and shows how humour and banter are used to resolve the hybridity tension between occupational groups.

The present article draws upon the theoretical framework discussed above. Studies of conflict resolution, military practices and peacekeeping with a critical gender perspective constitute the core of this framework. The article provides empirical support to theorizing over postnational defence and discussions on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations. In addition, it contributes to existing research by showing how relations of gender and occupation interact in shaping military work in fundamental ways. In doing so, it attempts to conceptualize the blurred practices of postnational defence in ways that move beyond a singular focus on gender relations. Before turning to the analysis, the design of the study is presented.

#### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

This article is based on an ethnographic study during which I spent five weeks with a Swedish armed forces international service unit preparing to go on a peacekeeping mission. Taking part in a wide range of activities such as lunches, lectures, free time in the billets, stressful exercises and much more gave me in-depth insights into the soldiers' everyday lives. The unit consisted of approximately 250 individuals,

divided into two sub-units: the rifle unit and the support unit. The rifle unit was made up of five rifle platoons. All members of the rifle unit had completed at least one year of military training. All the commanders, from deputy platoon commanders upwards, were military officers. The support unit was a logistics unit with medical, personnel and support staff. A good number of the unit's members were professional military officers. However, many of them had taken leave from their civilian employment as truck drivers, police officers or administrators at armed forces headquarters to be deployed as soldiers in the international service. The support unit staff with the least military experience had undergone a shorter period of military training for a week or two, adapted for international service. About five per cent of the soldiers were women. In order to obtain the broadest possible data, I tried to spend time with different members of the unit: women and men, soldiers and commanders, members of the rifle unit and the support unit.

During the initial phases of fieldwork, several aspects were especially intriguing to me: gender relations, occupational relations, military masculinities and the soldier occupation. When I discussed my study with members of the unit before and during fieldwork, I provided rather sketchy accounts of my research interests. This was partly because my interests were broad, and I wanted to keep it that way during fieldwork. By describing my interest in military practice and organization in rather general terms, I also hoped to reduce the risk of informants reacting against, or overly complying with, what they thought I wanted to hear.

When doing participant observation, it is important to remain open to what is happening and to work hard not to take things for granted. I tried to give the military unit 'the traditional ethnographic treatment of strangeness' (Neyland 2007).

Given the fact that I did not understand much of what people were saying during the first few days due to the use of military terminology and abbreviations, this was not a big challenge. As the work progressed, it became apparent that the number of things that were going on always exceeded my ability to see, hear, and remember. In the myriad of activities, it was necessary to reflect upon what caught my attention and why. As a researcher, I tried to observe what was most relevant to my research focus, while also paying attention to things that at first glance seemed irrelevant or difficult to make sense of. Given my research interests, comments and conversations on gender, what men and women are like, gender equality, Resolution 1325, and the soldier occupation were quick to catch my eye. In addition, material that relates to organizational change, the 'New Armed Forces', and being part of the international service were topics of interest to me.

When an ethnographic approach is employed, participant observation is usually the primary, although not necessarily the only, form of data collection. These observations are typically carried out 'in the field' as informants go about their daily business, rather than in situations constructed specifically for the purpose of research. Ethnographic studies tend to be small scale and carried out in a specific, limited context in order to facilitate an in-depth, situated account of interactions, meanings, and practices (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). As a participant observer, I followed the unit through its daily routines. The emphasis shifted back and forth from participant to observer, depending on the situation. In many activities, I was limited to simply observing the unit's work. The shooting range is no place for uninterrupted conversations, nor is an exercise in riot control where Molotov cocktails are surging through the air. A lot of the time, however, I was an active participant. At lunches, during breaks, and at

night in the café, I socialized, discussed the recent exercise, the future of the Swedish military or a recent episode of a popular sitcom like all the other soldiers. On some occasions, when I was alone with one or two members of the unit, spontaneous conversations arose and I became more of an interviewer.

During fieldwork, I repeatedly underlined that active participation in the study was voluntary. Since most of the members of the unit had no say in my being there, it was especially important that they could choose to keep their participation to a minimum. I tried to make sure that I did not intrude on anyone or press them to be more active in the study than they were comfortable with. Given these ethical challenges, I do not disclose the destination of the unit or their year of training. For reasons of anonymity, I am also deliberately vague about rank and other personal characteristics that could identify an individual member of the unit. Therefore, when I quote a 'male commander', the individual is one of countless potential informants. It is, however, safe to disclose that, in the terminology of Ramsbotham et al. (2011), the study concerns a third-generation peacekeeping unit that was deployed after 2000.

Throughout my observations I made quick and sketchy notes. Whenever possible, I stepped aside to make more detailed notes, including verbatim sentences. Every evening, the daily jottings were developed into full field notes, including reflections on methodological issues, analytical ideas and questions to follow up. The field notes also included a form of research diary, where I reflected upon the process, my role in the field and how I felt about it all (cf. Kostera 2007). In the article, the field-note material is presented in the form of excerpts that have been edited for clarity. Phrases within quotation marks are verbatim accounts. In the analytical process, I worked through the inter-

views and field notes by focusing on how soldiers construct demarcations between themselves. I found that there are three major categories that people draw on: gender, occupation, and ways of being a soldier. Each of them is attended to in the analysis. The first section focuses on two contrasting ideals of the soldier. The second attends to gendered divisions in peacekeeping work. The last analytical section deals with how soldiers construct occupational divisions.

#### WARRIOR OR PEACEKEEPER: TWO IDEAL TYPES OF SOLDIERING

When the Swedish armed forces undergo major transformations, what it means to be a soldier in the organization changes as well. In this section, I focus on tensions that concern the very idea of what it is to be a soldier as part of postnational defence. In the present study, there are two main ways in which the soldiers describe their occupational role, two ideal types of soldiering, which are both drawn on in the unit's training. One is based on the ideal of the traditional warrior, while the other projects a version of the soldier as a peacekeeper. The tension between the soldier as a warrior and the soldier as a peacekeeper is addressed in a lecture. A major who is in charge of all missions heading for the destination in question gives the rifle unit a lecture on the country, its history and the unit's primary task while in camp.

Major Alm talks about the early missions and what things were like during that time. In the first two missions in the country there was a need to 'keep them in check', he says. 'That's not what we are doing anymore', Alm says. 'We are simply their safety'. The primary task is not a military one, but to 'create a safe and secure environment' for those who are working to rebuild the country. After the lecture, Commander Johnsson adds: 'What we need now is brains

rather than muscle. Not a lot of hand grenades or ninja kicks’.

In this description of the role that soldiers are expected to take on when deployed, the major explicitly draws on the peacekeeping way of soldiering, which is connected to safeguarding security. The commander who addresses his unit after the lecture reaffirms this notion when he says that brains are needed rather than ninja kicks or hand grenades. The soldiers are taught a number of concrete tasks that will help create a safe and sound environment during the mission. Maintaining friendly contacts with the locals is one of them. Soldiers need to get to know the local inhabitants, gain their trust, and acquire access to information about the kind of help that is needed. A platoon commander practices this way of soldiering during an exercise where the platoon is stopped by a mob, acting the part of angry locals who are upset by the behaviour of another military unit. Instead of using weapons or force, the platoon commander solves the situation by stepping out of his car and talking calmly to the crowd. As he steps out, he removes his cap, smiles courteously and says, ‘Hello, my friends’. He then listens to what they have to say. In this situation, his behaviour serves to calm the crowd so that his platoon can proceed.

Another key task for soldiers in peacekeeping work is foot patrols. During the final week of the exercise, all parts of the rifle unit and the support unit come together to function as a unit and are assigned realistic tasks.

After dinner I join rifle unit group commander John and his group who are assigned foot patrol. There we are; me, John and eight soldiers in full uniform, walking through a residential area carrying automatic weapons. It is a beautiful, quiet night. It feels a lot like taking a walk. As we are walking, John tells me that foot patrols are one of the

key tasks for a rifle platoon at their destination.

Having spent over a month with the unit, watching them train for riots, practice shooting at the shooting range, have Molotov cocktails thrown at them, and so on, I begin to realize that this is what everyday military practice is likely to be in a peacekeeping mission. But despite that, the warrior ideal type of soldier is still very present in the unit.

It is after dinner when I sit down with a group of soldiers from the rifle unit. They are young, in their early twenties. We talk about why they want to be part of the international service unit and go abroad. They mention good money, experience and adventure. One of them looks at me and adds, with a hint of laughter, ‘I guess I’m a bit of a war-dick after all’.

These accounts support the argument made by Battistelli (1997), who shows that the ‘postmodern soldier’ of the voluntary, postnational defence is typically motivated by a desire for adventure and new experiences. The expression ‘war-dick’, mentioned here in a discussion about motivations for being part of the international service while accompanied by a hint of laughter, also flirts with the traditional and distinctly gendered image of the soldier as a warrior and an adventurer. This is the version of the soldier that Dawson refers to as the quintessential figure of masculinity. He states: ‘Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle’ (Dawson 1994: 1). What Dawson refers to as the ‘soldier hero’ is an idea present among the soldiers. When asked what made him decide to join the unit, one soldier states: ‘I guess it’s the feeling that you can make a difference. A little boy’s dream, saving the world.’

Like the idea of the hero, the concept of the 'warrior' is also a recurring one in the unit. When one of the most senior commanders of the rifle unit addresses his 'men' after a lecture or at gatherings, the common address is, 'Good afternoon, warriors!' A lot of the training in the unit draws on a very traditional warrior version of the soldier's occupation. In this version, the soldier is quite an aggressive figure. The soldier as an aggressive and violent figure emerges regularly during the training as well, for example, when the rifle unit exercises crowd and riot control:

The soldiers practice their fire step, baton techniques and standing steady during an attack. They learn to handle the shield and to use the baton on the boxing pillows held by the instructors. For every punch with the baton, they are taught to shout 'Back away! Back away!' in a deep and loud voice. Apart from learning to use and trust the equipment, the primary lesson learnt from the exercise is the appearance of the soldier. They are instructed to look 'aggressive and dangerous', and to work on their appearance. An instructor states that, 'If you can scare people with an aggressive appearance, you might not have to use the baton'. Another instruction is to hit hard when the baton is used. If the mob sees that the baton blow is painful, you might not have to hit as many people. When the exercise reaches its peak, the training area is simmering with bellowing, soldiers screaming 'Back away!', 'Aarggh!' and trying hard to look intimidating.

In the soldiers' training, there is an apparent tension between these two dominant versions of the soldier, the warrior and the peacekeeper. While they are learning to be soldiers in a peacekeeping mission, the soldiers are to navigate through a range of quite contradictory messages. They should look dangerous and aggressive, be friendly and accessible, appear threatening and empathic,

depending on the situation. Mastering these two versions of the soldier and moving between them is, some say, what makes a good soldier in a peacekeeping mission. When I asked one soldier what he thought was characteristic of a good soldier, he said:

It is very important to learn to adapt to the situation (...). You know, getting into this peace-like way of thinking, but at the same time being prepared to become as hard as a rock when it's necessary.

One way of understanding this tension, which is described as an inherent characteristic of the soldier, is to relate it to the complex task of peacekeeping, which is sometimes about fighting riots and sometimes about drinking tea with locals at an informal meeting. Battistelli et al. (2007) describe how armed forces in the post-national or postmodern context of contemporary peacekeeping operations are walking a tightrope. They need to mediate between the soldier as an occupation specializing in violence and the "fuzzier" ideology' (Battistelli et al. 2007: 152) that guides peacekeeping work in the field. The tension between these ideal types of soldiering is relevant to the study at hand, though at the same time I argue that it does not fully account for the extent to which words related to war, combat, and warriors are used among soldiers training to become peacekeepers.

Sophia Ivarsson suggests that there has been a gendered understanding of peacekeeping work in the military, as shown in the expression 'real men don't do peacekeeping' (Ivarsson 2004: 15). This can provide a clue as to why the warrior identity is maintained. Cynthia Enloe (1983) argues that men are taught that combat is the most integral part of being in the military. Historically, combat is also the part of military work in which the presence of women has been the most contested and



where formal restrictions against women's participation have been the most tenacious (Sundevall 2011; Yuval-Davis 1997). Combat is regarded as the very essence of masculinity. In a study of the Swedish armed forces headquarters, interviewees stated that the people, positions, and tasks that are linked to combat are highly valued. Combat is defined as the 'core' of the organization and ascribed a high status. The way it is described, it is the task that is the most exclusive, as well as the one with the strongest masculine connotations (Persson 2011). The divisions between soldiers as warriors and soldiers as peacekeepers are thus intertwined with gender. It is worth considering whether the lingering masculine connotation of the warrior, and the lure of adventure that soldiers describe as one reason for being part of the mission, makes it more difficult for them to learn what form of soldiering is expected in a certain situation.

### 'USE THE WOMAN SOLDIER!'

#### GENDER DIVISIONS IN PEACEKEEPING

The transition towards a peacekeeping organization changes the understanding of what a soldier should be. At the same time, it changes understandings of what it means to be men and women in the armed forces. The military is a man's world, but in peacekeeping women are made essential, and the importance of a gender balance is often highlighted when peacekeeping missions are discussed (Bridges and Horsfall 2009). In this section, I show how soldiers in the unit I studied operationalize divisions between men and women, and how these divisions are rendered legitimate by the focus on peacekeeping work.

When gender and peacekeeping are discussed in the unit, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is often mentioned. As part of the unit's training, the senior officers and commanders of both the rifle unit and the

support unit are given a lecture on Resolution 1325. The lecturer is a male military officer in uniform.

The lecturer starts off by talking about the operational need not to exclude half the local population at the unit's destination. 'This is not about cultural imperialism', he underlines, 'not about spreading Swedish gender equality in the world. It is about the success of the operation.' A review of the sixty latest collaboration reports, that is, the documents that report on soldiers' interactions with the local population, meetings and other activities in the area, revealed that no woman had been involved. This means that a lot of information has gone unreported, the instructor states. 'At home with young guys, this is not a problem', he argues, 'but now that we are going abroad we need women who can interact and work with women on site'.

The lecturer stresses the point that women soldiers are needed in order to establish contact with local women. The difficulty that men soldiers face when they try to approach women in peacekeeping missions is reported by several soldiers in the unit who have taken part in previous operations. The general experience is that it is easier for women to establish contact with other women, particularly in conflict or post-conflict situations when local women may find it especially difficult to trust a man in uniform due to previous violations. Cultural aspects are also referred to, such as religious decrees that prohibit women from interacting with unknown men. When the contribution of women is discussed, the tasks involved are always related to the soldier as peacekeeper rather than as warrior.

As the focus on peacekeeping increases, a new division of labour emerges. It is closely connected to the local interpretation of Resolution 1325, and means among other things that women are increasingly being recruited for very specific positions where

their gender is turned into a crucial resource. Apart from the general benefits of deploying women soldiers who can collaborate with local women, there is one specific part or unit where women's presence is explicitly called for: the search platoon within the rifle unit. These soldiers specialize in search tasks, for example, performing house searches in order to find guns, drugs or fugitives. I followed one of the groups in the search platoon as they performed a house search exercise:

In the car on the way to the house, Carlsson, the instructor for the day, prepares the man and the woman who will act the part of residents in the exercise. They are told to speak different languages. Each time a soldier addresses the woman, the man is to reply in her place. She is told to talk only if a woman soldier takes her aside. Carlsson wants the soldiers to understand the importance of the gender of the participants in this situation, something he has learnt himself as a soldier in a peacekeeping unit.

By the time the day turns into afternoon, the soldiers have surrounded the house, searched and questioned the man and woman together, and found newly fired weapons. They have not yet realized that the woman, a victim of trafficking, was one of the things they were supposed to find in the house. During the evaluation afterwards, Carlsson encourages the group to 'use the woman soldier!'

In the unit, there is a common understanding that the presence of women is crucial in the search platoon. In the group I follow during the exercise described above, there is one woman among the soldiers. This is not a coincidence, but reflects the gender composition of the other search groups as well. According to the search platoon commander, it is common to recruit one woman soldier for each search group. In the unit I studied, with few exceptions, women riflemen are found in the search

platoon, not necessarily because they are interested in this specialisation, but because of the emerging gendered division of labour following upon UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Based on the Resolution, the principle has been established in the armed forces that no woman should be exposed to a body search performed by a man, since it may be considered a violation.

In this context, the participation of women soldiers is highlighted, not because of a general political idea of gender equality, but for the good of the operation. This is the effect that a member of the headquarters refers to as 'ingenious' (Persson 2010), because it means that the 'woman question' has been incorporated into the most highly valued core of military work. At the same time, women officers are increasingly assigned a complementary role, which I find problematic. On the one hand, the understanding of the value of women in doing specific tasks is indeed highly relevant given the needs and experiences of local women. For women who have been violated by men in uniform during or after a conflict, the opportunity of relating to a woman soldier instead might be very important. The instructor who urges the search group to 'use the woman soldier' has witnessed the importance of women colleagues in an international operation. However, there is an interesting tension between the contribution of women for the sake of local women and the consequences of such a perspective in the peacekeeping troops in terms of gender equality. As the instructor tries to convey the message of women's key contribution to peacekeeping work to the soldiers, he constructs the one woman in the group as an important, yet different, member of the operation. Not only does she represent an important asset for the women they will try to assist when deployed, she is also framed as a different kind of soldier: 'the woman soldier'. This

point is further complicated when it comes to numbers. Since the contribution of women (rather than, for example, the gender awareness of the soldiers at large) is so clearly articulated in the unit I studied, a budding gendered division of labour can be discerned. According to the interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in this unit, the benefits of a gender-equal operation are achieved when four women are strategically placed in specific positions within a 120-member rifle unit.

As the tasks to which women contribute the most are specified in the unit I studied, the connection between men, combat and the warrior version of the soldier on the one hand, and women and peacekeeping on the other is reinforced. Thus, perceptions of women soldiers as different from and complementary to men, albeit relevant in peacekeeping work with local women, tend to essentialize women's contributions to peacekeeping operations (Carreiras 2010; Valenius 2007). In terms of numbers, the analysis shows that one result of the local operationalization of Resolution 1325 could in fact be an emerging gendered division of labour. Resolution 1325, as it is operationalized here, runs the risk of creating a gendered niche in which a handful of women are supposed to complement their male peers, thus creating a new and gendered division among the soldiers. It remains to be seen whether this tendency continues to develop and what the further effects of such a division will be.

#### 'REAL LIEUTENANTS, NO WHITE ONES': ESTABLISHING OCCUPATIONAL DEMARCATIONS

In the unit, soldiers are involved in a range of practices that serve to establish, maintain and challenge demarcations between occupational categories. These practices target demarcations between rifle unit soldiers and support unit soldiers, military

and civilian members of the unit, air-force men and army men. In the early stages of fieldwork, I noticed that the shoulder flashes on the soldiers' uniforms had different colours: some wore white stars, others wore bronze ones. It took me weeks to fully grasp the implications of these differences. This section deals with the issue of 'bronze' and 'white' soldiers and shows how soldiers articulate and draw upon these and similar occupational demarcations.

Many perceive military hierarchy to be a clear-cut and formal structure. On the one hand, it is. Some command, others obey, and a person's rank is explicitly spelled out on his or her chest, making hierarchy quite straightforward. However, the analysis shows that certain aspects of formal jurisdiction are up for negotiation. It also changes over time. As Tallberg (2009) points out, peacekeeping units are hybrid organizations. Within the hybrid soldier collective, an important demarcation is drawn between 'white officers' and 'real officers'. The term 'white' refers to the colour of the stars on their shoulder flashes ('real' officers wear bronze stars). One of the senior members of the support unit is a 'white' officer. He has some experience of the serving in the armed forces dating back to the 1970s and states that he can hardly believe the changes that have taken place in the organization since then.

Peter says that it is a rare privilege to receive such a high rank as a civilian, and it is rare to be assigned the position he has in this mission. Legal and medical personnel have been civilians traditionally, he says, but few others. 'The Armed Forces is really transforming', he states; 'I had lunch the other day with a white colonel, a civilian, that is. Incredible. That was unthinkable in the seventies'.

There are 'white' commanders that are high in rank and highly specialized, like the

senior support unit member above, but there is a tendency not to regard them as 'real officers'. During fieldwork, there were several occasions when I heard 'bronze' officers speak in derogatory terms of their 'white' peers. Formally, the white stars mean that a person does not have the right to command troops. In a more informal sense, it can mean that a 'white' soldier is referred to by a 'bronze' instructor as 'some fucking civilian dude' in passing. This can be seen as an illustration of what Tallberg (2009) labels hybrid tension in the encounters between the military and civilian spheres in peacekeeping work.

In the rifle unit, all commanders from deputy platoon commander level upwards are professional military officers, 'bronze' ones. In addition, they are all men. A military officer rank is a key criterion for a commanding position in the unit. Leadership in the field (i.e. commanding troops) is a task reserved for professional officers. It is also a task that carries a strong masculine connotation. Formal though the military hierarchy is, there is still space for negotiating where exactly demarcations are to be drawn between unit members when it comes to leadership.

A group of support unit commanders are taking part in war command training. They are discussing how emergency situations are to be handled in the camp, for example, when a soldier is injured or killed. All contacts during a possible emergency go through the officer on guard duty, a task that rotates within the unit. This brings them to a discussion of who is to be eligible for the task of officer on guard duty. 'Who can be assigned guard duty?', one of the military officers asks. The officer who is leading the session says that her unit used military officers and officers of the reserve from the support unit, lieutenant or higher. She adds: 'Real lieutenants, not white ones'.

When the unit decided to adopt this

standard, only 'bronze' officers were part of the discussion. In this situation, leadership is clearly linked to the status of 'real', that is, bronze officers. Thus, an occupational demarcation within the unit is established.

Another aspect that soldiers draw on when they construct occupational demarcations is combat. In general, there is a tendency to create a demarcation between the two sub-units, the support unit and the rifle unit, based on combat. If need be, the support unit soldiers should relieve the rifle unit soldiers, for example, if there is a riot and many soldiers are needed over a long period of time.

The support unit is on the barracks square, exercising crowd and riot control. An instructor watching the exercise starts talking about the support unit: 'Some of them are total civilians, they don't know anything. (...) Kind of coarsely, we call them meat, you fill up on meat. So, you use the crap to fill the gaps if you have to. Send in the storage guy or the chief of staff.'

The soldiers he is talking about all belong to the support unit. He states that most of them are completely inexperienced when it comes to combat. However, a good number of them are professional military officers, just like the rifle unit commanders. By drawing on their 'supportive' function in relation to the 'combat' role of the rifle unit, this instructor highlights the differences between the two sub-units. By constructing the support unit officers as non-combat soldiers, it becomes possible for him to refer to them as 'meat' or 'crap', 'total civilians', in spite of the bronze stars on their shoulders and their military officer status.

Contrary to the many ways in which 'white' soldiers are described, the adjectives associated with the 'bronze' soldiers are few in the material. I find that this is because the norm does not require detailed

description. The one phrase that is used to describe them is characteristically ‘real officers’. The situation is quite different when it comes to the ‘white’ soldiers, those who do not fit the norm. They are described as ‘some fucking civilian dude’, ‘meat’, ‘crap’, and ‘total civilians’, and constitute the opposite of ‘real’. Who is interpreted as other than ‘real’ is, at times, quite blurred. Professional military officers of the support unit can be associated with the ‘crap’, even though they have ‘bronze’ status. Thus, the status of ‘real’ officers is associated not just with ‘bronze’ officers, but specifically with ‘bronze’ officers in the rifle unit.

In addition to the demarcation between bronze and white soldiers, there are interesting tendencies to establish gendered occupational demarcations between the rifle unit and the support unit. In English-speaking militaries a distinction is made between ‘tail’ and ‘tooth’, where the former refers to support functions and the latter to combat roles. Paul Higate (2003: 31) describes administration as a ‘feminized task’, stating that ‘military clerks probably occupy the lowest reaches of an informal gender hierarchy’ in the British military. In the Swedish armed forces, there is a similar division between core and support that is constructed along the lines of feminine and masculine (Persson 2011). In the unit I followed, there is a similar tendency for soldiers to assign feminine traits to administrative and support-oriented tasks, while command positions and combat are described as the most masculine ones:

I am spending some time in between exercises with Sven, a rifle unit commander in the officers’ billets. We are talking about his family and how he feels about leaving his wife and children to go abroad. Erik, a support unit colleague who is a male military officer just like Sven, chats with us as he changes his uniform shirt. They are getting into some friendly banter, to the point that Sven laughs

at Erik and calls him a ‘typing chick’ (*skrivsnuppa*). Erik laughs too, and goes back to packing his bag.

The term ‘typing chick’ is traditionally aimed at women civilians, and is often used in a condescending manner. Civilian women in the Swedish armed forces tell stories of being called ‘typing chick’, or even ‘damn secretary’, by military men who draw on this gendered military/civilian binary to put a woman colleague back in her place (Persson 2010). The example above is quite different: it is not used to put a woman colleague down; in fact, it is not directed at a woman at all. In addition Erik, a military officer of the big, muscular kind, does not seem to be offended by his colleague’s remark. Probably, this is because he does not feel threatened by it: his masculinity is not questioned by his friend. None the less, this situation illustrates how an important and distinctly gendered boundary of core and support is played upon when a rifle unit commander refers to a male colleague who is a senior officer in the support unit as a ‘chick’.

Within the soldier collective, a wealth of demarcations are drawn by the unit members. ‘Real officers’ reaffirm their own professional status in relation to ‘white’ ones, as do rifle unit members in relation to the ‘typing chicks’ of the support unit. There is a tendency, within the military at large as well as in other organizational contexts, to construct an internal hierarchy between work associated with the ‘core’ tasks and those understood as ‘support’ roles (Dahle and Iversen 2001; Persson 2011). People associated with support tasks tend to be assigned a more marginal position and a lower status. In addition, the support roles are often assigned a feminine character. As the status of ‘real’ officers is associated with professional military officers and the rifle unit, the divisions within the soldiering occupation between the rifle unit

and the support unit are given both occupational and gendered connotations.

### CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The notion of postnational defence, it is argued, is a hybrid, blurred, fuzzy construct (Battistelli et al. 2007; Sion 2008; Tallberg 2009). Such military organizations, like the Swedish armed forces, are built around a fundamental paradox: they are made up of soldiers trained for war in a peacekeeping role (Kronsell 2012). This underlying contradiction is one of several tensions that have been addressed in this article. I have argued that the soldier collective, which is often perceived as highly homogenous, is in fact becoming increasingly diverse, partly because of the increased focus on peacekeeping. This diversity becomes apparent when the everyday work of soldiers in an international service unit is studied. The aim of the article has been to show how demarcations are established in the soldier collective, and how these demarcations are entangled with gender.

In the analysis, three interrelated processes are highlighted: the contradictory understanding of the soldier, the gendering of peacekeeping work, and the construction of occupational demarcations. The analysis points to tensions concerning the understanding of the soldier as a warrior on the one hand and a peacekeeper on the other. In their training, soldiers are trained in both of these ways of soldiering. They are taught to be friendly and cooperative when the situations calls for it, and aggressive and intimidating when necessary. In the everyday ways of communicating within the unit, however, there is a strong tendency to draw upon the warrior ideal using a stereotypical macho jargon. The tension between doing war and doing peacekeeping is perhaps the most fundamental one in postnational defence (Kronsell 2012). However, it also carries a gendered aspect. The

tendency to favour the warrior discourse in social interaction and the emphasis on training for war can be understood as a way of reproducing a traditional masculine warrior ideal, despite the shift towards other tasks.

If war has traditionally been given a masculine connotation, peacekeeping carries strong associations with women and femininity. As a result of an increased focus on peacekeeping, women are made increasingly important in military work. In fact, women are made essential, as 'women soldiers', for the success of peacekeeping operations. In today's military work, women are not only accepted as soldiers, they are seen as crucial for the success of peacekeeping (Carreiras 2010; Valenius 2007). In the peacekeeping role for which they are training, where their male colleagues may not be able to interact with and gain the trust of local women, this is a highly relevant aspect. At the same time, the analysis shows that gender equality as a military issue is being transformed in important ways. Gender equality is no longer a marginal political or administrative issue, but concerns the very core of military work and operational efficiency. At the same time, women are becoming a gendered resource that is needed in a few specific roles, potentially resulting in a gendered division of labour in the soldier collective.

The analysis also highlights that there is another category that is important when it comes to diversity and social demarcations in the unit I studied. In national defence, military staff such as officers and conscripts were those involved in the core of military work. Today, soldiers in an international unit can be a highly hybrid category ranging from students, truck drivers and administrators to professional military officers carrying out the core role of military work, namely combat. This leads to hybridity tension (Tallberg 2009). In the unit I studied, there were a range of

attempts among soldiers to construct occupational divisions within the unit: between air-force men and army men, rifle unit soldiers and support unit soldiers and, not least, between bronze and white officers. The bronze status is connected with leadership, while the white officers tend to be considered less than 'real officers'. One explanation for this is that both support tasks and administrative tasks tend to be perceived as lower in status because of their civilian and feminine connotations. These occupational demarcations affect how everyday work is organized, who is considered competent for specific tasks, and how different parts of military work are gendered.

Drawing on research on gender, military practices and postnational defence, this article has shown how intricate and paradoxical relations of gender are being shaped in a Swedish international service unit training for peacekeeping work. From previous studies, we know that the characteristics and value ascribed to women in postnational defence are complex and that Resolution 1325 and the idea of gender mainstreaming comes with some unintended consequences that tend to reinforce binary, complementary gender patterns. The article contributes to existing research on gender and peacekeeping by showing how another important category contributes to the construction of social divisions in the unit: occupational relations. It is argued here that gender and occupation intersect in postnational defence, shaping in fundamental ways organizational hierarchies, the understanding of what a soldier is, and what counts as 'real' military work. In order to understand and potentially change the perceptions of men and women in postnational defence, we must therefore take into account the fact that gender relations are intrinsically intertwined with occupational relations.

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## SUMMARY

*This article explores the turn from a national to a postnational defence and the increasing diversity of military work that follows. Based on an ethnographic study of an international service unit in the Swedish armed forces, it aims to show how demarcations are drawn in the soldier collective and how these demarcations are entangled with gender. The analysis addresses three parallel processes: the contradictory understanding of the soldier, the gendering of peacekeeping work, and the construction of occupational demarcations. In the hybrid soldier collective, there are tensions concerning what a good soldier is: warrior or peacekeeper. Furthermore, the gendered understanding of peacekeeping work means that women are made essential to the core of military work, while at the same time producing a new gendered division of labour. In addition, the construction of occupational demarcations connected to gendered military hierarchies affect social conditions in the unit.*

Alma Persson, PhD

Department of Thematic Studies, Unit of Gender Studies

Linköping University, Sweden