

## Institutionalizing the WPS Agenda in Sweden and South Korea

Jiso Yoon & Love-Lis Liljeström

This policy brief is the latest outcome of a collaboration between the Institute for Security and Development Policy's (ISDP) Korea Center and Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI). The article intends to compare Sweden's and South Korea's primary achievements and flaws in formulating and implementing their national action plans on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security

Within the women, peace and security (WPS) discourse, there has been a tendency to focus on the ""Global North" and their achievements in the ""Global South". As a result, women, peace, and security efforts in many East Asian countries that do not fit into this binary are easily overlooked and not as known to the broader public. To counteract this faulty binary, the Stockholm and South Korea based institutes collaborated on gender, development and WPS issues, resulting in a series of seminars bringing together WPS experts in Europe and South Korea/East Asia. In this article the focus is exclusively on the distinct WPS approaches of South Korea and Sweden. The paper compares the NAPs of both nations in order to determine what each country can learn from the other in terms of institutionalizing the WPS agenda, and ultimately translates these lessons to policy implications for both countries. The paper calls for more collaboration between Sweden and South Korea on WPS.

#### Introduction

The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), adopted in 2000, was the first to formally acknowledge women's role in peace and conflict. It also urged all states to adopt gender perspectives to peace and security. More specifically, the two main aims of the resolution are to acknowledge the gendered impacts of conflict and to increase female participation in peace processes and political institutions. UNSCR 1325 acted as a

trailblazer for a series of resolutions later adopted related to women's role in preventing and resolving conflict.<sup>1</sup> Since the resolution was first adopted, it has been developed to encompass more areas and now includes indicators that enable implementation tracking on both the national and international levels. At the national level, member states have been encouraged to adopt National Action Plans (NAPs) to ensure their country's implementation of UNSCR 1325. These NAPs have acted as an engine for the resolution's implementation because they encourage

member states to review their own internal priorities and responsibilities in accordance with the WPS agenda.

As of September 2021, 21 years since the first WPS resolution was introduced, 98 countries have adopted NAPs.<sup>2</sup> NAPs commonly include concrete committments by governments to institutionalize and mainstream issues of gender into the national peace and security agenda. Despite this, there is a wide variation in the extent to which NAPs are implemented and institutionalized across countries. After the initial adoption of a NAP and its implementation, some countries have moved on to drafting the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th versions of their NAPs. Thematic focus of the actual NAP also varies, since it typically reflects unique goals and challenges related to implementing the WPS agenda in each country's particular context.

Despite such a wide variation, some common elements have been identified as being critical to the successful implementation of NAPs cross-nationally: (1) inclusive design and implementation process,

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(2) transparent monitoring and reporting method, (3) clear budget and timeline, (4) political will.<sup>3</sup> Put differently, the presence/absence of strong political will, a results-based monitoring and evaluation plan, identified and allocated implementation resources, and inclusive design processes and established coordination systems for implementation determine the degree to which a NAP is likely to be effective<sup>4</sup>.

#### PARTICIPATION

Calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians; and as Special Representatives of the U.N. Secretary-General.

#### PROTECTION

Calls specifically for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including in emergency and humanitarian situations, such as in refugee camps.

#### PREVENTION

Calls for improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; strengthening women's rights under national law; and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes.

#### RELIEF & RECOVERY

Calls for advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens, including by respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps, and considering the needs of women and girls in the design of refugee camps and settlements.

Figure 1 - The Four Implementation Pillars of UNSCR 1325
The Women, Peace and Security agenda today has four indicators which are used to track the implementation of Resolution 1325 and provide the basis for a holistic approach to peace and security. These fundamental pillars are: Participation, Conflict Prevention, Protection, and Relief and Recovery.<sup>5</sup>

This article compares Sweden's and South Korea's primary achievements and drawbacks while highlighting the flaws in formulating and implementing their NAPs across the four elements mentioned above. In the women, peace and security discourse, there has been a tendency to focus on the Global North and their WPS contributions in the Global South. As a result, women, peace, and security efforts in many East Asian countries that do not fit into this binary are easily overlooked and not as known to the broader public. South Korea is a new player in the WPS arena, both internationally and nationally. Sweden, on the other hand, has been a strong advocate for WPS since the adoption of UNSCR Resolution 1325, and the launch of its feminist foreign policy in 2014 has redoubled its commitment to the WPS agenda. By comparing the NAPs of both countries, the article analyses what different states may learn from each other in order to successfully implement the WPS agenda.

## Overview of 1325 NAP in Sweden and South Korea

South Korea released its first 1325 NAP in 2014 after a series of discussions on the WPS agenda within and outside the government involving government ministries, the National Assembly, and the civil society network.<sup>6</sup> During this adoption period, the WPS agenda was first introduced in the country, whereby 8 ministries developed 74 policy strategies to pursue the WPS agenda across the four major pillars of prevention, participation, protection and

relief, and recovery as described in the resolution. In the 2nd NAP (2018-2020), efforts were made to institutionalize the WPS agenda by forming a legal basis through revision of the Gender Equality Basic Act.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, "implementation and monitoring" was added as a separate pillar to the existing list of four pillars and the number of policy strategies to pursue WPS increased to 83. In the 3rd NAP (2021-2024), the WPS agenda is expected to expand further, mainly by strengthening efforts to localize the WPS agenda in the South Korean context, addressing issues concerning women, peace, and security on the Korean peninsula.

In this process, conscious efforts have been made to restructure existing action strategies, and develop new strategies that closely align with the overall WPS agenda. As a result of such reshuffle, the total number of action strategies dropped from 83 in the 2nd NAP to 50 in the 3rd NAP. At the same time, several new strategies were added to deepen and expand WPS agenda in the Korean peninsula.8 For example, adding on to the existing strategy to restore the honor of the comfort women victims, a new action strategy proposes to expand 'commemorative' projects to restore the honor of the comfort women victims and for future generations. Another example is the inclusion of an action strategy to provide assistance for diplomatic activities on women, peace, and security, including that of the newly appointed Ambassador for Gender Equality.

ADOPTION PERIOD 1ST NAP (2014-2017) INSTITUTIONALIZATION
PERIOD
2ND NAP (2018-2020)

EXPANSION PERIOD 3RD NAP (2021-2024)

8 Ministries, 74 strategies across 4 pillars

9 Ministries, 83 strategies across 5 pillars

10 Ministries, 50 strategies across 5 pillars

Table 1 - South Korea's 1325 National Action Plan
The 8 government agencies include the following: Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Unification, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Education, and KOICA. To this list, National Police Agency was added in the second period, and National Unification Advisory Council in the third period.<sup>9</sup>



Sweden, like South Korea, has renewed its original action plan twice the most recent renewal occurring in 2016, when the third NAP for the period 2016-2020 was introduced which has now been effectively prolonged. The first action plan was adopted in 2006, and was developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with a reference group comprising of representatives from several government departments, civil society organizations, and academic institutions. Several enhancements and adjustments have been made since the first action plan was released. These changes include having 12 focus countries<sup>10</sup> and adding the fourth aim of "conflict prevention" to the original three goals of "improving women's influence and meaningful engagement in peace processes and peacebuilding," "strengthening women's and girls' protection," and "gender mainstreaming in leadership and expertise." 11 The most significant change however, is probably the implications which the 2014 enactment of the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) framework brought with it.12

South Korea's NAP, just like Sweden's, promises to strnegthen international development cooperation in women, peace, and security."

The FFP stipulates that Sweden will apply a gender mainstreaming approach, which means that a gender equality perspective is used systematically throughout all foreign policy. The main commitments of the Swedish FFP can be summarized as the four Rs, pledging to: "...strengthen all women's and girls' Rights, Representation and Resources, based on the Reality in which they live." Although the Swedish FFP and the Swedish UNSCR 1325 NAP contain little references to each other on paper, there is no doubt that the gender mainstreaming approach has facilitated the implementation of the action plan. In brief, the incorporation of the FFP along with the broader gender mainstreaming paradigm endorsed

by Sweden's government constitute one of the NAP's unique features and primary strengths.

On the other hand, the biggest strength of South Korea's 1325 NAP is that it is inward- and outwardlooking at the same time. NAPs of major OECD Development Assistance Committee members are often criticized for being too outward-looking, mainly addressing overseas conflicts. 15 This is evident in the Swedish case, as the WPS NAP is mostly used as a foreign policy tool, something that Swedish civil society has critisised. 16 By contrast, South Korea's NAP successfully "localized" the WPS agenda in meaningful ways. Specifically, paying attention to violations of women's rights in the form of forced military sexual slavery (i.e. "comfort women") by the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII, its 1325 NAP reaffirms the government's commitment to raising awareness on issues of sexual violence during armed conflict and to further contribute to its prevention and the protection of victims.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the South Korean government's efforts to enhance women's participation and roles in peacebuilding result from the Korean Peninsula's division.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, the 3rd NAP highlights specific action strategies, such as improving women's representation in government delegations to inter-Korean negotiations, as well as to ensure increased participation of women in programs related to inter-Korean exchange and unification. The fact that South Korea was successful at localizing the WPS agenda through its 1325 NAP does not mean, however, that it is entirely inwardlooking. There is an "outward" aspect to the South Korean 1325 NAP as well. South Korea's NAP, just like Sweden's, promises to strengthen international development cooperation in women, peace, and security. South Korea has committed to expanding international development cooperation projects designed to strengthen the empowerment of women and protect their human rights.

The NAPs of Sweden and South Korea appear to have both clear contrasts and some unexpected commonalities at first glance. In the following section, we delve further into the two countries' performance in the four areas previously identified

as being important to the successful implementation of 1325 NAPs, namely: (1) inclusive design and implementation process, (2) transparent monitoring and reporting method, (3) clear budget and timeline, (4) political will, and end the article by assessing overall policy implications.<sup>19</sup>

# Inclusive design and implementation process: focusing on civil society

The first element that has been identified as crucial to the success of a 1325 NAP is an inclusive design and implementation process, in particular the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs). Yet, many governments fail to include civil society to the extent that UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions require. As a result, CSOs are often overlooked and undervalued.<sup>20</sup> NAPs should be planned and implemented with a diverse constituency of civil society to broaden the agenda, improve action plan content, and increase accountability.<sup>21</sup> This is something that the Swedish NAP has done and continues to do, ensuring civil society participation at all stages of the action plan's formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The action plan also explicitly specifies that CSOs are key partners in realizing the plan and that their "skills, commitment and experience" are highly valued.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Sweden supports and provides funding for CSOs both in Sweden and abroad.23 Although Sweden's work with the WPS agenda in general is considered to be accompanied with a high level of CSO participation, some Swedish civil society organisations consider CSO involvement specfically in the areas of disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation insufficient, and argue it to be "state and male dominated".24 As disarmament intersects with all four pillars of the WPS agenda,25 Swedish civil society has called on the Swedish government to assess domestic disarmament policies in relation to the WPS agenda, and to secure CSO participation in these discussions through reference groups or delegations.<sup>26</sup>

Despite efforts to include civil society, its role in the drafting, implementation, and monitoring process is still limited in South Korea. The 3rd NAP states

that each government agency and ministry must convene a monitoring session annually that includes representatives from civil society. This can be regarded as a progressive step forward, since previous versions of the NAP did not include any mention of independent monitoring sessions organized by relevant ministries/agencies outside the governmentwide sessions organized by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. However, a fundamental challenge remains: representatives of civil society groups may indeed be included in the public-private consultation body, meaning that civil society may give feedback and approval, but this does not mean that civil society groups actively set and implement goals of their own. This is quite ironic as women have played a central role in leading South Korea's peace movement since peace and unification became an important policy agenda in the 1990s following South Korea's democratization. For instance, Women Making Peace, a prominent women's peace group in the country, was founded in 1997 and was vocal in pushing the government to draft South Korea's 1325 NAP.27 Along with other groups leading the peace movement in the country, Women Making Peace actively engages in raising awareness of the WPS agenda and implementation of the 1325 NAP in South Korea.<sup>28</sup> Women's peace groups should continue to be vocal and provide valuable feedback to the government in the drafting and monitoring process.

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## **Transparent monitoring and reporting method**

Another crucial element of NAPs is to have a transparent monitoring and reporting system in place, as this ensures that both progress and challenges are



detected early. Any positive examples, methods, or policies can be scaled up and applied to other areas, while areas with slow progress can be addressed and even redesigned during implementation. The Swedish NAP outlines a monitoring and evaluation structure comprised of bi-annual meetings convened by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as entails a thorough implementation matrix and annual report on the implementation, also developed by the MFA. The National Action Plan is implemented as part of routine operational requirements, as well as operational planning, reporting, and accounting. This is intended to ensure that efforts are not ad hoc, but rather are guided by clear strategy, leadership, and accountability.<sup>29</sup>

... there is no guarantee that relevant actors will commit the funds required to carry out the plan if there is no earmarked money for its implementation."

In South Korea, as previously mentioned, the 2nd NAP made efforts to institutionalize the WPS agenda, by adding "implementation and monitoring" as a separate pillar to the existing list of four pillars. The implementation and monitoring pillar in the current NAP includes several activities aimed at establishing a monitoring system and building a foundation for effective implementation of the NAP, such as each relevant ministry holding annual monitoring meetings jointly with the representative members of civil society, and reporting results of implementation and monitoring of the NAP to the Gender Equality Committee under the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>30</sup>

## **Clear budget and timeline**

In line with Sweden's gender mainstreaming approach, Sweden does not have a specific allocated budget for the implementation of the action plan. Instead, Sweden states that the implementation of the budget should be part of the regular organizational

planning procedures and that it should take place within the context of regular budget allocation.<sup>31</sup> As stated in the action plan, it must be "included where regular decisions are made, resources are allocated and norms are created."<sup>31</sup> The idea is that this will prevent the WPS agenda from being overshadowed or sidestepped in favor of other issues and activities. The argument against a separate budget is that it risks making the plan "other"; that is, not being seen as a central part of foreign and domestic policy.

However, the choice to not include earmarked money or a budget for the implementation plan in the Swedish NAP has been criticized by several international as well as Swedish CSOs.33 International CSOs have repeatedly emphasized the importance of having a specific budget to implement UNSCR 1325 NAPs. The argument is that there is no guarantee that relevant actors will commit the funds required to carry out the action plan if there is no earmarked money for its implementation. It also risks the NAP being made subject to political vagaries. Given the rising backlash against gender equality in Sweden and many other nations around the world, establishing allocated budgets for implementing NAPs may be even more important now. Nevertheless, Sweden allocated more than 1 billion SEK (circa 110 million USD) on implementing the action plan in 2019. As gender equality, women's rights, peace and security are all contemporary Swedish priorities, it appears that the criticism leveled at Sweden by CSOs is not currently focused on spending more but rather on safeguarding the current level.

Similarly, South Korea has no separate budget allocated to relevant government ministries to implement the 1325 National Action Plan. Such limited resources in part explain why early versions of South Korea's 1325 NAP included several strategies that government ministries and agencies were already doing (e.g., sexual harassment and assault prevention training), rather than initiating new activities and programs that closely align with the overarching goals of the 1325 NAP.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, the implementation and monitoring pillar in the recently issued 3rd NAP includes a statement that ministries and agencies must make an effort to

secure funding (e.g. ministerial budget) to pursue their agenda related to the 1325 NAP. While a clear budget cannot be regarded as either necessary or sufficient condition for advancing the WPS agenda, financing commitments can be important to the successful implementation of a NAP, particularly when the government is less explicit about its willingnessto promote the WPS agenda as one of its core priorities.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Political will**

The Swedish government has declared itself as feminist and made a clear commitment to promoting gender equality in all policy-making. Gender mainstreaming has been a key strategy in Swedish gender equality policy since 1994 and, as mentioned earlier, means that all decisions in all policy areas and at all levels should be characterized by a gender equality perspective. In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to declare a feminist foreign policy. The FFP not only saw gender equality as a fundamental goal, but also as a prerequisite to achieving Sweden's broader foreign policy goals peace, security, and sustainable development. In an evaluation report on the implementation of the third UNSCR 1325 NAP, it is stated that adopting a feminist foreign policy has enhanced the implementation and ownership of the national action plan.<sup>36</sup> UNSCR 1325 is a key goal for Sweden in its international development cooperation and WPS was a central priority for Sweden during its tenure on the UN Security Council (2017-2018), where Sweden repeatedly emphasized the urgency for member states to adhere to the agenda. Continued WPS awarenessraising within all government municipalities and among the general public is a continuous process. However, an evaluation report published in 2019, which described the evolution of the WPS agenda in Sweden, stated that the increased legitimacy and awareness of the agenda has meant that energy previously spent describing the resolution and its relevance can now be focused to a greater extent on actual implementation.<sup>37</sup> In brief, political will is demonstrated by a robust domestic gender equality framework, as well as a feminist foreign policy and identification of WPS as a key priority.

Despite reaching the third phase of the NAP in South Korea, there is limited awareness of the WPS agenda among the public and that of government officials who do not work directly with the National Action Plan. Furthermore, in contrast to Sweden, there is little social agreement that WPS is a pressing concern both domestically and globally. Such limited awareness and belief in the importance of the WPS agenda makes it difficult for the WPS agenda to become a central part of the government's core priorities. Feasible policy alternatives may be considered and adopted only when there is understanding and agreement among the public and political elites about the importance of WPS.38 In this regard, the lack of strong political will to mainstream gender in the foreign and security policy sector significantly limits the diffusion of the WPS agenda in South Korea.

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Inspired by the 4th UN World Conference on Women in 1995, Ministry of Gender Equality was established in 2001 and the adoption of gender mainstreaming policy tools like gender budgeting and gender impact assessments followed in subsequent years. Nevertheless, a significant gender gap still remains in the country, as illustrated in policy areas such as political representation, labor, employment, etc.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, gender equality in the foreign and security policy sector has not fared much better. As of 2019, the proportion of women in high-ranking decision-making positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was only 5.9 percent, two percentage points lower even than the average across all government ministries and agencies. 40 Some progress has been made: President Moon

Jae-in appointed Kang Kyung-wha as the country's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2017 and Cho Young-sook as the country's first Ambassador for Gender Equality in 2020. However, appointing more women in high-ranking positions is one of many things that can be done to advance the WPS agenda in the country. Other important methods include allocating financial resources, publicly announcing the government's clear committment to advance the WPS agenda, and developing a policy initiative to advance gender in the peace and security sector (e.g., Canada's Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations).

#### **Analysis and Conclusion**

This article has aimed at assessing the overall performance of Sweden and South Korea – two states formally committed to formulating and implementing NAPs – across four elements identified as being critical to advancing the WPS agenda. Furthermore, the article also seeks to identify lessons for the two countries from each other's cases.

The South Korean case points to the [...] need for taking on more commitments for national engagement on the agenda for women, peace and security..."

Some parallels and differences may be identified in the preceding descriptions of Sweden's and South Korea's respective 1325 NAPs. The most advantageous characteristic of the NAP in the instance of South Korea is that it is both inward-and outward-oriented at the same time. In contrast, the Swedish 1325 NAP is mostly employed as a foreign policy tool with few domestic ramifications. This can partly be explained by the country's absence of conflict and highly developed domestic gender equality framework, which includes its own national legislation and policy. Therefore, the NAP has not

become an instrument for domestic change but has rather been used as a guide for Swedish strategy and policy in countries where it pursues development projects.

However, just because Sweden has a well-functioning gender equality policy in the country does not mean that national commitments within the NAP are not needed. The South Korean case points to the importance of looking inward. Although "looking inward" carries a different meaning when applied to the Swedish context, it can still be useful to demonstrate the need for taking on more commitments for national engagement on the agenda for women, peace and security, which civil society has called on Sweden to do. Although this paper does not go into depth on the specifics of these requests by civil society, it has mentioned that civil society has emphasised the importance of evaluating domestic policies related to disarmament. At the same time, the more foreign policy oriented Swedish case provides a learning model for South Korea's 1325 NAP that has yet to develop strategic focus/ thematic priorities and specific plans to work with international partners to strengthen international development cooperation in the areas of WPS. South Korea should demonstrate its commitment to this by elaborating on these points in future versions of the NAP.

In addition, our comparative analysis showed that implementing the WPS agenda in Sweden is much easier as there is a general awareness of the agenda's importance both within the government and among the public at large. In contrast, the main problem facing South Korea in this context is that WPS has not taken firm root yet in the government, nor is there any significant awareness among the public and political elites. This lack of awareness leads to a lack of interest, resulting in limited funding. As identified in both the South Korean and Sweden cases, the countries do not have an allocated budget for WPS implementation. However, because Sweden's feminist foreign policy prioritizes women, peace, and security, this is reflected in the government's spending, and hence a dedicated budget specifically to advance WPS might not be as



critical, although civil society would disagree, as they have called on Sweden to include a specific budget in the NAP. Efforts to secure a separate budget is very much necessary in South Korea, as relevant ministries have little incentive to develop and implement policy strategies to advance WPS. In this sense, "pressuring" appropriate ministries to acquire financing for the WPS agenda at the ministry level is a solid start. Whether or not government ministries and agencies make an effort to actually secure funding and how much of a difference that makes in expanding the WPS agenda remains to be investigated in the future.

At the same time, budget allocation is not the sole measure that can spur positive change. Because a lack of awareness and knowledge about the profitability of gender equality in general and the importance of WPS in particular are fundamental obstacles to the South Korean NAP's success, awareness-raising and a change in norms must be pursued concurrently. As the Swedish example demonstrates, having a well-established domestic gender equality awareness among the public and policy domain facilitates and can reinforce WPS implementation. Civil society plays a key role here - as "natural" advocates with the aim of influencing the public and decision-makers, they can function to raise awareness of the WPS agenda, mobilize people, and strengthen their ability to assert their rights. Supporting civil society to build expertise, and, to a greater extent, including them as implementers, may be one important way forward. In this regard, strong political will is essential to develop a broader framework that emphasizes gender equality in the foreign and security policy sector (as Sweden has done through its adoption of a feminist foreign policy) and promote the WPS agenda as a part of this comprehensive strategy.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, the findings of this comparative analysis suggest paths to pursue for further development of the women peace and security agenda in both countries. Although the Swedish and South Korean experiences in developing and implementing the agenda are distinct, and may have different challenges ahead, they do still provide lessons for each other. Therefore, establishing cooperation and exchange of know-how and lessons learned between South Korea and Sweden, both at the

government and CSO levels can be of value for both countries.

Authors - Jiso Yoon is Director of Center for International Development and Cooperation at Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI). She received Ph.D. in Political Science from the Pennsylvania State University (USA). Prior to joining KWDI, she held academic positions at Ochanomizu University (Japan), and the University of Kansas (USA). She has published widely on women's political representation, gender and political behavior, and policy advocacy in South Korea and Japan. In 2020, she was a member of the research team that evaluated previous versions of South Korea's 1325 NAP and drafted the 3rd 1325 NAP—a research project commissioned by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) in South Korea.

Love-Lis Liljeström is a Junior Research Fellow with ISDP's Stockholm Korea Center. She holds a bachelor's degree in Peace and Conflict from Uppsala University and previously spent six months in South Korea at Seoul National University where she studied modern economics, the Korean language, and culture, as well as China's rising global influence. Additionally, Ms. Liljeström complete an internship at ISDP's Stockholm Korea Center during Spring 2021. Ms. Liljeström's main research interests include women, peace and security, climate security, and peacebuilding.

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#### **Endnotes**

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