

Considering the Viking Age Through a Human Security Approach

Shannon Lewis-Simpson, Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security, Canadian Defence Academy

In 2020, I spent six months in Iraq with NATO as the Gender Advisor to the Commander of NATO Mission Iraq, tasked with gender mainstreaming throughout the mission, providing advice as to how to include and integrate women within the defence and security of Iraq, focusing on participation.

October 31, 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace, and Security. This resolution and ten supporting resolutions promote the participation of women in decision-making and leadership processes; the prevention and protection of vulnerable populations against conflict/crisis-related sexual and gender-based violence; and reporting and recovery post-crisis or post-conflict. Men, women, boys, and girls are considered to have the potential to be agents, victims, radicalists, bystanders, financiers, every position on the spectrum of conflict, so as to understand conflict and crisis, and mitigate security threats. Our collective research can be informed through a consideration of how people are affected by periods of conflict and crisis in the Viking Age especially in terms of five cross-cutting topics associated with human security: children in armed conflict; human trafficking; cultural property protection; conflict-related sexual violence; and protection of civilians.

In analyzing the situation in Iraq and other modern crisis and conflict situations, there are obvious parallels with how we approach, or do not approach, how people are affected differently in post-conflict/crisis situations within Viking-Age society.

The questions I pose to the Congress are these: have we REALLY approached Viking-Age society from a modern gender perspective? What, if anything, can a careful study of the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda over the past 20 years contribute to academic and popular gender interpretations of the Viking Age? And, following from this, how might a consideration of human security and the various topics within further an understanding of past conflict and crisis situations?