



1325 AND BEYOND  
An International Essay Competition

# 1325 And Beyond

# Winning Essays



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
WASHINGTON, DC  
USA | Canada | Global Dialogue

 **WIIS**  
WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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Washington, DC

Citation: Women In International Security (WIIS),

*1325AndBeyond: Winning Essays*

(Washington, DC: WIIS, July 2020)



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# 1325 And Beyond Winning Essays

“2020 is a year to take stock of the 1325 agenda. Through their writing, these youth strengthen the agenda by voicing their ideas and standing up for gender equality! The fresh ideas and passion in the essays give hope, despite challenges of inequalities that have been reinforced by the pandemic.”

*Fauziya Abdi Ali*

*President and Founder of WIIS-Horn of Africa and Sisters without Borders*

“On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the groundbreaking UNSC Resolution 1325, these exciting essays provide a blueprint for ensuring that women are engaged as leaders, planners, and beneficiaries of our global work to build peaceful, just, and prosperous society. These innovative and timely proposals—from mainstreaming feminist principles to expanding public awareness through social media to adapting the Resolution to regional realities in Africa, Asia and Latin America—should be fully incorporated into plans of action for the United Nations, host governments, and civil society.”

*Donald Steinberg, Senior Fellow, Our Secure Future, and Executive Director, Mobilizing Men as Partners for Women, Peace, and Security*

“It was a pleasure (and quite refreshing!) reading these high-quality essays that provide creative and concrete action plans towards resuscitating UNSCR 1325 and the entire Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Together, this cohort of scholars and practitioners demonstrated that there remains much work to be done to create socially just and equitable societies, but that achieving this goal is certainly possible.”

*Chantel Cole, Executive Director, WIIS Canada*

“During these difficult times, reading the essays of such young, brilliant minds was a breath of fresh air. The energy, innovation and practicality with which the Women, Peace and Security agenda was tackled instills in me a sense of hope about our future.”

*Karma Ekmekji, International Affairs Advisor to Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Founder of #Diplowomen*

“I was impressed by these critical, visionary, targeted and hopeful perspectives of young scholars and professionals from across the globe. I hope their recommendations are implemented.”

*Joanna Barelkowska, Project Officer International Democracy Program Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.*

## PREFACE

In February 2020, Women In International Security (WIIS) and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC launched an international essay competition **1325AndBeyond** to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and stimulate new thinking about the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

UNSCR 1325 called on all UN member-states and the UN Secretary-General to:

- (1) Increase the representation and participation of women in conflict prevention and conflict resolution processes, including in security institutions;
- (2) Integrate gender perspectives in the analysis of international security issues; and
- (3) Adopt special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict settings.

Nine subsequent UN Security Council resolutions have reinforced and refined the WPS agenda.

Regional organizations as diverse as the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have developed organization-wide policies and Action Plans to incorporate the guidance from UNSCR 1325 into their deliberations and actions. At the national level, some 84 states have developed National Action Plans and adopted legislation to implement and advance the WPS agenda. Civil society organizations have played important roles in mobilizing governments and international organizations. All these actions have been important steps forward and necessary for progress, yet they have not been sufficient.

Progress towards the goals of the WPS agenda has been limited and uneven. Even where progress has been made, many of the gains are vulnerable and potentially reversible.

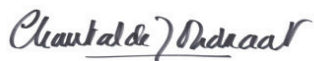
The underrepresentation of women in national and international security institutions and deliberations remains glaring. Gender perspectives are insufficiently integrated into analyses of national and international security challenges. Violence against women and girls has continued at horrifying levels, especially in conflict settings. In addition, the Covid-19 crisis has intensified and brought to the fore existing and new gender inequalities.

As societies and nations across the world face unprecedented challenges to gender equality, human security and lasting peace, implementation of the WPS agenda is more important than ever. The **1325andBeyond** competition has triggered many innovative and imaginative ideas and strategies to achieve the objectives of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who submitted essays. We have been excited to see the great diversity of perspectives, calls for more comprehensive

approaches to the WPS agenda, ideas for better implementation and monitoring mechanisms as well as engagement of all segments of society. The great number and the diversity of contestants and submissions make us hopeful for the future.

We would also like to thank the members of the international jury: Fauziya Abdi Ali; Joanna Barelkowska; Chantel Cole; Jessie Evans; Chantal de Jonge Oudraat; Karma Ekmekji; Jessica Grün; Layla Hashemi; Karin L. Johnston; Miriam Laux; Maxinne Rhea Leighton; Kayla McGill; Hannah Neumann; Chiedo Nwankor; Hannah Proctor; Liane Schalatek; Donald Steinberg; Dominik Tolksdorf; Anna Von Gall; Roksana Verahrami; Karin Warner; and Ursula Knudsen Latta. Special thanks go to Dominik Tolksdorf of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC; Kayla McGill, Roksnana Verahrami, Julia Batavick, Susan McLoughlin, Maeve Murphy, and Rachel Sedehi from the WIIS team; Valerie Norville for editorial support; as well as to the *Mobilizing Men as Partners for WPS*, an initiative of Our Secure Future, for contributing to the Honorable Mention awards.

This volume brings together the winning essays of the **1325and Beyond** competition. An impressive group of women and men from around the globe. We hope that international organizations and governments around the world will take the recommendations of the essay writers to heart.



Dr. Chantal de Jonge Oudraat  
President, WIIS  
Washington, DC



Mr. Bastian Hermisson  
Executive Director,  
Heinrich-Böll- Stiftung Washington, DC

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# *UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda: A Feminist Response to Authoritarianism*

Ana Laura Velasco Ugalde

**T**he Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has reached a new generation. Feminists who were children and teenagers when UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was approved are the new young voices upholding the responsibility to guard its accomplishments and commit to its advancement. These are particularly challenging times for such a quest. In the last five years, the world has seen the return of authoritarian, xenophobic, misogynist, and racist leaders in many countries both in the “Global North” and “Global South.” In addition, a pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of traditional security approaches, even as these authoritarian leaders capitalize on it to further their grasp on power. We know authoritarianism grows in crisis. This is the world WPS is encountering, and this is the challenge for my generation.

Having learned about the history, accomplishments, and struggles of the WPS agenda while working on my master’s degree and from my experience as a reporter and activist in Mexico, I write this essay to propose ways that civil society, journalists and UN Women can advance the objectives of UNSCR 1325 over the next decade. Underlying my proposal is the understanding that the pandemic provides empirical, powerful proof of the failures of the current system to keep every person in the global community safe. The return of authoritarian masculinist—and at times militaristic—figures represents an enormous test for the pursuit of an inclusive, feminist approach to peace and security, but a strategy that fails to encompass 2SLGBTQIA, indigenous, disabled people, immigrants, refugees, and environmental protection in the “Global North” and “Global South” will fail to deliver justice.

## *What Is At Stake?*

Feminist critiques of traditional approaches to international security were right all along. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, director of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security, rightly asks, “Why are we awash in weapons and military equipment but short on medics and masks?”<sup>1</sup> The rapid spread of COVID-19 is pushing the debate on the prioritization of military policies over public health services. The risk of a pandemic was foreseen, but the general unpreparedness of states reveals the dim attention the threat received. In contrast, consider the resources focused on traditional security debates over European defense and the relevance of NATO. Will the rise of military expenditure to 2 percent of GDP, as agreed by the allies and demanded by the current US administration, make Europeans safer? What actually saves lives? And whose lives are saved? One can only wonder if, after the devastating loss of human life in Spain and Italy during the pandemic, it is smart—and ethical—to invest fiscal resources to reach NATO’s goal instead of investing in health care systems, which women largely shape and staff. It is them, not soldiers, who are saving the most lives.

The supposed division between private and public, questioned by feminists for decades, is also contentious in the current crisis. The emergency measures most countries proposed for facing the pandemic ignore gendered, racialized, and economic violence. In a recent conference, scholar and activist Angela Davis stated, “This whole idea of ‘staying at home’ assumes we can retreat to a safe, nurturing environment, a refuge.”<sup>2</sup> A number of reports from countries around the world warn of the increase in domestic violence, and the UN Secretary General also called attention to the issue.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, the call to stay home has exposed the violence in private spaces. A similar argument can be made about the supposed clear-cut division between peacetime and wartime. We must recognize that these alerts confirm one of the criticisms that the WPS agenda has received during the past two decades: its focus on conflict situations. As is being proved in this global crisis, women face structural violence in a continuum that does not end in “peacetime.”

FIRST PRIZE

Despite overwhelming evidence of the need for a different approach to security, authoritarianism is not in retreat. At the moment of this writing, there are indications leaders are abusing the crisis to acquire increased powers, as in Israel and Hungary. Another troubling outcome since the detection of the virus has been the harassment and crackdown on whistleblowers and journalists who question official narratives, as in China. Furthermore, some responses to COVID-19, especially in the “Global North,” have included eugenic approaches by discriminating against disabled and racialized bodies. Similarly, indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable, given the systemic discrimination they suffer from health care systems. Therefore, it is important to contextualize the goals of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda in this pivotal moment. I urge a change of paradigm in the next decade. My two proposals aim to strengthen the first line of responders to authoritarianism: those responsible for the accountability mechanisms of society and for transnational advocacy of the WPS agenda.

## *Proposals*

Reconnecting UNSCR 1325 with its constituency must be a priority for the next decade. My first proposal is to significantly expand efforts to put civil society at the center of the WPS agenda.<sup>4</sup> Civil society organizations (CSOs) were vital to UNSCR 1325. Yet they are often unrecognized, marginalized and undervalued.<sup>5</sup> Women cannot only be represented or viewed through a gender lens, since their struggles also include other dimensions of the violence they may suffer. This is where CSOs come in, by embodying intersectional identities. But in order to execute this function, they cannot be left alone. It is precisely where they are most needed that they are most vulnerable. That was the case, for example, of queer activist Marielle Franco in Brazil, murdered in 2018, and women’s rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, who has been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for almost two years. The persecution of human rights defenders is an ongoing global crime and a threat to the WPS agenda. I propose to powerfully expand the network of grassroots NGOs, with a deeply intersectional approach that creates platforms for endorsement and support between the “Global North” and the “Global South.”

In this regard, it is imperative not to perpetuate the focus on the “Global South” as “case studies.”<sup>6</sup> The agenda must recognize that CSOs are doing indispensable work in the “Global North,” which has vulnerable populations as well, as in Canada, where they fight to end femicides against indigenous women and girls. The objective is not to further restrict the characterization of CSOs only as watchdogs, but to open channels for them to have the resources to fulfill this role effectively. This effort must be led by UN Women offices around the globe, since can reach a wider range of intersectional, grassroots CSOs. Importantly, UN Women should be a facilitator, not a sponsor. Also, this emphasis does not replace National Action Plans, or Regional Action Plans, as public policy instruments. Rather, it aims to provide an opportunity for CSOs to fully exercise the dimensions of accountability, expertise and ownership and to step up the pressure in countries that have not yet implemented the instrument to fulfill their promises.

The next decade is the moment of truth for the WPS agenda in more than one sense. The developments of the past years indicate that it is urgent to address the spread of misinformation. The hard-won gains that the agenda has achieved must not be taken for granted. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently pronounced, “Our common enemy is the virus, but our enemy is also a growing surge of misinformation, so we need to urgently promote facts and science.” This warning could not be more appropriate, both in the context of the current crisis and to explain the larger picture. For example, in Mexico, religious groups are blaming the surge of the COVID-19 on feminism and queer people. This is not a new tactic. In Germany, the terrorists who attacked Halle’s synagogue last October blamed feminism for the lack of births and the arrival of immigrants. Furthermore, it is well known that many of these authoritarian, masculinist leaders are openly against equality, the core value of the agenda, and that they also thrive, and even actively engage in misinformation.

Therefore, my second proposal is to tap journalists as protagonists of the WPS agenda. This responds to two issues: Feminist stories are still framed as women’s issues, not as justice and intersectional ones, and, journalism continues to be a high-risk profession in many countries. Just like CSOs, they are directly responding to the threat of authoritarianism. Over the next decade, proponents of the WPS agenda must ally with journalists around the globe to create a mechanism for sharing information related to the objectives. The focus of the

alliance must be investigative journalists, small newspapers, and community radios that are concerned with intersectional justice, violence and conflict. UN Women offices around the world can lead this effort as a parallel project to that with the CSOs. Here, too, its role would be as a facilitator for enabling contacts between journalists and CSOs but also as a source of data related to the agenda. The latter would help open channels of communication that allow for quicker verification of information. Ensuring the flow of transparent, objective, verified information is essential to counter false news and other information that is used to spread fear and confusion.

## Conclusion

The implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda in general has largely been through traditional security approaches, with actors such as police, military and UN Peacekeeping Operations reinforcing the centrality of the use of force and armed personnel in working for peace and democracy.<sup>7</sup> The limitations of that approach, long emphasized by critical and feminist research, are impossible to ignore in the current crisis.<sup>8</sup> As Ann Tickner argues, true security cannot be achieved until unequal power structures of gender, race and class are eliminated or at least diminished.<sup>9</sup> This is why it is so relevant to privilege intersectional, decolonial approaches in the next 10 years. In order to achieve this, the agenda must reencounter its constituency and close ranks with those first responders who are not only in an unmatched position to push for inclusive change but are also most exposed to the attacks of authoritarian leaders. We need courage to embrace this moment, and we need radical alternative.

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# Enhancing WPS in the 2020s: Lessons Learned and Strategies for Transformative Change

Agathe Christien

SECOND PRIZE

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) to increase women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, protect women and girls from gender-based and sexual violence, and provide humanitarian relief and recovery through a gendered lens. At the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, progress has however been slow and uneven across the globe.<sup>1</sup> The challenge of the decade ahead is to push for transformative change.

Major existing and emerging issues such as climate change, global health crises and violent extremism will threaten international security in the 2020s and require gender-inclusive responses. These major issues are an opportunity for the United Nations, governments, and civil society to advance the WPS agenda and adapt it to the needs of today and tomorrow by reflecting on lessons learned and proposing effective strategies and actions for gender mainstreaming.

## Advancing the WPS Agenda

The past two decades have seen incremental progress of UNSCR 1325's objectives. In the new decade, we must advance the current WPS agenda by learning from the mixed successes of women's participation in peace processes and proposing recommendations for the UN and member states to effectively mainstream gender in UN peacekeeping and efforts to counter violent extremism.

### *Learning from the Mixed Success of Women's Participation in Peace Processes*

Women remain excluded from formal peace negotiations. Data from the 2010s show that men represented 97.5 percent of chief mediators and 91 percent of mediators in formal peace processes.<sup>2</sup> The very few women who access the formal peace table face major challenges, including tokenism and limited roles to influence negotiations.

Adverse trends can be observed in gender provisions in recent peace agreements. While there was a major increase in gender provisions in peace agreements after the passage of UNSCR 1325—from below 10 percent in the 1990s to 45 percent in 2013—the number of references to women and girls decreased to 11 percent in 2018.<sup>3</sup> This decrease can partly be explained by the decline in the number of women listed as parties or third parties to the agreements in recent years.<sup>4</sup> Vigilance will be required to respond to this backslide.

Even where peace accords are gender sensitive, as was the 2016 Colombia Peace Accord, gender provisions often fail to be implemented. As of 2018, about half of the 130 gender-related commitments of the Colombia agreement had not been initiated and only 4 percent fully implemented.<sup>5</sup>

The UN and other international actors must advocate for women's effective inclusion at all stages—from early dialogues to agreement implementation—among parties and third-party delegations. Pressing for inclusion is particularly critical in Yemen, Syria and Libya, where the risk of women's exclusion is high.

While women are typically excluded from formal peace processes, they have played major roles in informal peace processes. Dayal and Christien found that 60 percent of 1989–2017 peace processes had identifiable

informal peace processes, of which 71 percent had clear evidence of women's groups' involvement.<sup>6</sup> Women's groups have successfully organized for peace and legitimated formal peace processes. They have also provided critical expertise and information to formal negotiators and broader constituencies. For example, the Women's Coalition in South Sudan was established to strengthen women's participation in the peace process. The Coalition provided technical support for women participants in the formal peace talks. This support helped women negotiate a 35 percent quota for women's share of places in executive bodies and two additional seats for women in the institutions for the implementation of the agreement.<sup>7</sup>

Moving forward, it will be important to capitalize on the successes of women's grassroots organizations and better connect the various diplomatic tracks to channel grassroots voices. Informal processes can give women a space to network, build legitimacy and gain skills.<sup>8</sup> Funders and organizers should provide resources for women to participate in those informal peace processes by covering costs of travel and transportation and providing child care and security. Such support can encourage women from various backgrounds to participate and help diversify peace processes.

Women have political agency and do not speak with one voice, especially in protracted violent conflicts, where polarization is high. In the 2020s, the challenge will be to meaningfully engage young women in peacebuilding activities and adopt an integrated approach with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Concrete actions include the creation of grassroots-led regional networks of young women peacebuilders, in partnership with UN Women, for peer learning, coordination, and channeling recommendations to the formal peace table.

### ***Adopting a Gender Equality and Human Security Approach in UN Peacekeeping***

One of the major goals of UN Peacekeeping is to increase the participation of women in police, military and civilian contingents of UN peacekeeping missions. While women's representation constituted 1 percent of deployed uniform personnel in 1993, they represented 4.4 percent of military personnel and 11.1 percent of police personnel in 2019.<sup>9</sup> Progress in this sector has also been incremental and lacks transformative power.

Research has documented that women peacekeepers can make a difference. For example, an all-female police unit in Liberia used less force than other units and at the same time improved locals' trust in peacekeeping.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of this all-women unit was also associated with a major decline in reported cases of sexual abuse by peacekeepers, from 47 in 2005 to 18 in 2009.<sup>11</sup> Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone also demonstrated that female victims of sexual violence were more likely to report such abuse to a female officer than a male officer.<sup>12</sup> While such research helps to make the case for greater participation of women in peacekeeping and the security sector, it also risks perpetuating essentialist views of women's roles rather than a gender equality perspective.

The challenge for UN Peacekeeping in this decade will be to comprehensively mainstream gender in evaluating peacekeeping effectiveness beyond indicators such as female peacekeepers' share in total units and the reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by rebel groups, government forces, and peacekeepers themselves. Mainstreaming gender in UN peacekeeping includes collecting sex-disaggregated data in all peacekeeping activities and adopting a human security approach to peacekeeping that responds to the peace and security needs of local men and women. Regular needs assessments, consultations and engagement can help accomplish this mainstreaming.

### ***Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE): Strategies for Long-Term Gender-Responsive Policies and Programming***

In efforts to integrate the WPS and P/CVE agenda, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2242 in 2015 to increase women's participation and mainstream gender in P/CVE and counterterrorism. Since then, the UN and others have taken gender perspectives into consideration, and there has been discussion of the roles women may play in countering and fueling violent extremism. The challenge is to move P/CVE theory into concrete practice and policy at the state level.



States like the United States still tend to charge fewer women than men with terrorism.<sup>13</sup> Women are less likely to be arrested and convicted and receive more lenient sentences than men.<sup>14</sup> Yet female foreign fighters in camps like al-Hol in Syria are spreading ISIS ideology to their children and other women.<sup>15</sup> States should address these ticking time bombs by adopting long-term gender-responsive policies for repatriation, prosecution, and rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs across the globe overall fail to mainstream gender and address women's needs. Effective strategies can include credible ways out of violent groups by engaging local female religious leaders, providing child care during rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and offering vocational training and education opportunities of interest.<sup>16</sup>

While UNSCR 1325 and subsequent Security Council resolutions have provided an important framework to increase women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, sustained efforts are required to effectively implement it. In the new decade, we must both advance the current framework and adapt it to address emerging peace and security challenges.

## ***Adapting the WPS Agenda to the Critical Issues of Tomorrow***

The 2020s offer an opportunity to adapt the current agenda to issues that were neglected when UNSCR 1325 was adopted 20 years ago. These include addressing the impacts of climate change and health crises on women and girls, especially in conflict contexts, and transitioning to a more comprehensive understanding of gender in a Gender, Peace and Security framework.

### ***Integrating Climate Change into the WPS Agenda***

From degradation to conflict-related pollution, the environment is one of the “silent victims of war.”<sup>17</sup> Conflict and climate change exacerbate underlying inequalities and disproportionately affect women and girls. The impacts of climate change and environmental vulnerability on women and girls, especially in conflict contexts, and gender-responsive climate adaptation should be integrated into the WPS agenda and become a priority.

Forward-looking approaches include gender-responsive and climate-resilient post-conflict reconstruction. For example, in post-conflict Sierra Leone, Freetown mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr has led the three-year city plan “Transform Freetown,” which addresses informal sanitation and flood mitigation, especially for women in informal settlements.<sup>18</sup>

Burundi faced major deforestation due to conflict and illegal exploitation of the forest's resources. In the post-conflict period, grassroots women from the Association Femmes et Environnement au Burundi (AFEB) led the replanting of 400,000 native and eucalyptus trees in the Kabira forest. Once harvested, 70 percent of the income generated by the eucalyptus trees returned to the women's group.<sup>19</sup> Such sustainable management of natural resources can contribute to women's livelihoods and address environmental vulnerability.

### ***Mainstreaming Gender into Responses to Pandemics and Health Crises***

Public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have become a major threat to international security and have major impacts on women, as they care for out-of-school children and experience greater domestic-partner violence.<sup>20</sup> Such health crises are particularly harmful in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-affected areas due to poor health systems and dire economic situations.

In the early 2020s, states must deal with short- to long-term effects of COVID-19. Women's effective participation and equal representation in health response planning, decision-making and implementation will be particularly critical to ensure that states adopt recovery measures targeted at women.

## *Moving from Women, Peace and Security to Gender, Peace and Security*

The WPS agenda focuses too narrowly on women—sometimes as a homogenous entity—and does not sufficiently take into account the diversity of women and gender roles. Moreover, men are also affected by gender-based violence and rape in violent conflict. A revised agenda should address how conflict affects men and women.

Toxic masculinity can play a major role in explaining sexual violence perpetrated by UN peacekeepers and in fueling violent extremism from far-right movements to jihadist groups.<sup>21</sup> For example, this violence particularly hurts LGBTQ communities, which have been targets of terrorist attacks such as the 2016 nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida.<sup>22</sup>

In such a context, moving from the Women, Peace and Security agenda to a Gender, Peace and Security framework in the 2020s will better address the gender impacts of conflict on men and women from all backgrounds.

To conclude, we can draw on lessons learned from the past 20 years of advocacy for the WPS agenda to bring about transformative conflict management in the new decade. The security threat landscape is evolving, and states must adapt the WPS agenda to existing and emerging needs by pushing for gender-responsive and human security approaches. Backlash against women's effective participation will likely be an issue in various sectors. Effective strategies for states, civil society, and the UN can mitigate the backlash against gender equality and help overcome barriers that hinder women's effective participation in peace and security.

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# *Mobilizing a Forgotten Sector: A Case for a New Media Code of Ethics on Gender and Conflict*

Annina Claesson

**H**ow is UNSCR 1325 to be implemented if no one has heard of it? On the cusp of the resolution's 20th anniversary, this question may appear simplistic. Yet given the slow rate of progress in promoting the goals of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we must revisit the question of who is supposed to be doing the promoting. The obvious answer is often curiously omitted in policy papers and research reports. Why is the media ignored as a change actor for the WPS agenda? More important, how can the media's transformative potential for implementing UNSCR 1325 in the next decade be unlocked? One answer involves reexamining the principles that determine how journalists cover gender-related issues in conflict zones and galvanizing actors around a new agenda: a code of ethics for journalists covering gender and conflict issues.

Too often, the media is simply thought of as a conduit through which the work of "real" policy actors can be communicated and promoted. Nonetheless, the crucial role of the media was recognized as early as 1995 in the Beijing Platform for Action as well as by UN Women's 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>1</sup> The media can play a role in transforming social norms in the interest of preventing conflict by facilitating the open flow of information during conflict and contributing to justice and reconciliation in post-conflict contexts.

The media is shaped by the world around it but also has the capacity to change it. Thus media can promote gender equality and prevent conflicts but also can reproduce harmful social norms or even directly traumatize the subjects of their stories. Johanna Foster and Sherizaan Minwalla carried out a study in the aftermath of ISIS attacks on Yazidis, interviewing Yazidi women about their interactions with the international media.<sup>2</sup> Their findings were upsetting: 85 percent of the women reported that journalists engaged in unethical practices, often pressuring them to speak or failing to protect their privacy.<sup>3</sup> This unacceptable conduct is commonplace. Currently, the media overwhelmingly operates on a "gender-blind" basis, failing to consider gender perspectives in conflict reporting.<sup>4</sup>

Considering the key role the media plays in shaping the societies it reports on, it follows that it has a special responsibility to establish ethical standards for day-to-day newsroom activities. Journalists are no strangers to normative frameworks: The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics is taught in every Journalism 101 class.<sup>5</sup> As conflicts have become more complex and more publicized in the media, some have issued calls for stronger, more concrete frameworks to help journalists portray societies in conflict accurately while better protecting their safety and that of their subjects.<sup>6</sup> It is imperative that a gender perspective permeate every part of such a code.

In order to promote UNSCR 1325 over the next decade, media outlets, international organizations, and grassroots organizations must come together to draft a code of ethics specifically addressing gender in conflict. While such a code would not be legally binding nor intended as a one-size-fits-all solution, a consultative process supported by the UN and other relevant actors could help mobilize the media sector to further the aims of UNSCR 1325 and generate a snowball effect for further efforts.<sup>7</sup>

## *The Media as a Peacebuilding Actor*

As UNESCO points out in its handbook for reporting on conflict in South Asia, it is not helpful to make distinctions between “conflict-sensitive gender reporting” on one hand and “gender-sensitive conflict reporting” on the other.<sup>8</sup> A new normative media framework aligned with UNSCR 1325 need not focus solely on better practices in conflict reporting with gender concerns as a side note nor concentrate on gender inequality without due consideration of the stakes of a particular conflict. Responsible journalism considers both elements as fundamental building blocks of its practice.

One of the most famous approaches to reporting in conflict settings is undoubtedly Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick’s concept of peace journalism.<sup>9</sup> Originating in Galtung’s approaches to positive peace, peace journalism is grounded in a simple idea: When journalists choose which stories to report and how, they need to consider how their work can enhance prospects for peace. The choices that journalists make in conflict settings affect not only how societies understand conflict but also what they perceive as possible solutions. Yiping Cai argues that genuine peace journalism inherently includes a gender perspective, but in 2020 such perspectives are still conspicuous by their absence in global conflict reporting.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the time, women’s experiences of conflict take up no airtime and occupy no headlines. The 2015 Global Study on WPS concluded that women are virtually invisible in news reporting on peace and security, except where they are portrayed as victims of conflict.<sup>11</sup> In much broadcast coverage of conflict zones, the only women seen are crying in the background. Another analysis undertaken by the Global Media Monitoring Project found that only 13 percent of news media stories on peace and security themes included women as the subject. Women were identified as central actors in only 6 percent of news stories.<sup>12</sup>

A new code of ethics on gender and conflict needs to address structural concerns for the media sector at every level. One such concern is the lack of female journalists doing peace and security reporting. The simple presence of female journalists in newsrooms does not guarantee gender-sensitive journalism, but there are gendered considerations in the coverage of conflicts that may benefit from a gender-balanced media workforce. For example, Emma Barnett argues that in some conflict-affected Muslim countries, women and children only feel comfortable opening up to women reporters, as they are not allowed to be seen talking to men outside their families.<sup>13</sup> Gender stereotypes lead to women being underrepresented among journalists covering peace and security topics, as these are often considered “hard news” and coded as “men’s work.”<sup>14</sup> Addressing inequalities and stereotypes in the newsroom is an essential step not only to better coverage of gender-related issues in conflict settings but to improve diversity in journalism overall.

## *The Media as a Link in the Chain for UNSCR 1325 Mobilization*

Another step in this holistic agenda is to build UNSCR 1325 literacy through partnerships between the media and CSOs. The past few decades have seen several success stories in this regard. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Cameroon rallied owners of media houses to become allies in a widespread awareness-raising campaign that involved training and utilizing the media to reach a wider audience through op-eds and participation in TV and radio broadcasts. This campaign served as a catalyst for discussions to establish a UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan in Cameroon.<sup>15</sup>

Such partnerships can also function well outside traditional newsroom structures. Women- and youth-led Women’s Situation Rooms and Women’s Peace Huts have been established mainly in African countries to monitor, prevent and mitigate violence by engaging a wide range of stakeholders in constructive dialogue and peace advocacy.<sup>16</sup> Media outlets run by women and designed to focus on women’s experiences in conflict provide another opportunity for such engagement. UN Women’s 2015 Global Study highlights community radio stations run by women in Uganda and Fiji that organize “listener clubs” to bring in women from local communities to share their experiences, insights and ideas.<sup>17</sup> These initiatives highlight the need for and transformative benefits of community engagement through media.

Adequate resources are crucial to an effective media engagement strategy. The lack of funding is an endemic problem for implementation of UNSCR 1325 across all sectors.<sup>18</sup> This issue becomes even more pressing with the decades-long crisis in funding for the media industry as a whole, and particularly for the intensive investigative journalism required for true transformative work in high-risk settings.<sup>19</sup> The lack of resources needs to urgently be addressed at all levels of UNSCR 1325 implementation in order to make true progress possible in the 2020s.

## ***A Code of Ethics for Gender- and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting***

A new code of ethics for reporting on gender in conflict could galvanize new partnerships but should also build upon previous work. Handbooks and guidelines on the subject have been developed by Inter-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society groups targeting specific regions, including the African Union, the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, and UNESCO.<sup>20</sup> It is important to continue consultations with local organizations representing a wide range of world regions and cultures when drafting a new code of ethics in order to be mindful of how such a code may be interpreted in widely different contexts. However, adapting familiar frameworks such as the SPJ's code of ethics for journalists may be a good place to start. Drawing on civil society recommendations as well as codes of practice in peace journalism, a code of ethics for gender and conflict may include some of the following:

- ***Seek Truth and Report It***

- Establishing protocols for making sure that women's opinions and perspectives are included before, during and after conflict; systematically providing varieties of analytical lenses for how gender-related issues may be affected by the conflict; reporting on women's peacebuilding initiatives; debunking false news and myths that may result in gender-based violence or contribute to harmful gender norms; accounting for diversity within groups and differentiated impact of conflict (based on gender identity, ethnicity, age, class, education, sexual orientation, as well as conflict-specific categories such as refugees, combatants, child soldiers, or survivors of gender-based violence).

- ***Minimize Harm***

- Making sure that stories covering gender-based violence are used not just to depict the plight of individuals but to shed light on systemic issues.
- Exercising special caution when reporting on gender-based violence in conflict, particularly sexual violence; considering and discussing impact of publishing such stories with subjects/sources; providing anonymity for victims and witnesses; taking all possible precautions to avoid retraumatizing victims.
- Taking measures (rigorous risk assessment, emergency plans, psychosocial support) to ensure the safety of female journalists working in conflict zones bearing in mind that they are likely to encounter different types of violence than that experienced by male colleagues, such as sexual violence, harassment, or other forms of gender-based violence.

- ***Act Independently***

- Mobilizing wider support for press freedom and emphasizing gender equality as a key condition for overall freedom of expression.
- Being honest and transparent about sources of funding, partnerships, or other ties that may affect how gender issues in conflict are reported on.

- ***Be Accountable and Transparent***

- Attend and organize regular trainings to address own prejudices and biases around gender norms; providing gender-disaggregated data on all things pertaining to human resources management in the newsroom, including gender parity at all levels.

- Cultivating allies within and outside media organizations for overcoming gender bias in reporting and holding other media actors accountable when they fail to do so.

A code of ethics is not just a bullet point in a journalism school syllabus. It is a set of guiding principles that should direct every aspect of a journalist's work and provide a reference for accountability. A journalistic workforce committed to the principles of UNSCR 1325 is a vital asset for achieving a holistic, positive vision of peace.

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# 1325 and Beyond: Moving the WPS Agenda in Latin America Forward

Paula Drumond and Tamya Rebelo



THIRD PRIZE

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has evolved tremendously over the past two decades. Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, pledges to mainstream gender into peace and security initiatives have proliferated. Nine subsequent resolutions raised collective expectations that these commitments would translate into effective policies. Implementation, however, largely relies on activities carried out by states, international organizations and civil society. As a result, the WPS agenda has diffused unevenly across the globe. Of the 83 countries that have developed national action plans (NAPs), about 70 percent are in Europe and Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Until 2015, Chile was the only Latin American country to adopt a NAP. The 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 marked a tipping point in the region, with the approval of the second Chilean NAP and the adoption of national plans in Argentina (2015), Paraguay (2015), Brazil (2017), El Salvador (2017) and Guatemala (2017). Perhaps not surprisingly, WPS debates tend to mirror the existing geographical imbalance of the worldwide NAP uptake. Many of the challenges and touted achievements reflect analyses developed in Europe and Africa. The result has been a major disconnect between WPS policies and the violent realities facing Latin American women.

This essay reflects on how best to move the objectives of the WPS agenda forward in one of the most dangerous regions in the world for women and girls.<sup>2</sup> We argue that the transformative potential of the WPS agenda in Latin America requires new ideas, languages and practices that move beyond the war/peace dichotomy entrenched in traditional WPS formulations. The first part of this essay overviews the regional landscape of gendered violence and insecurity, which has been persistently neglected in traditional WPS debates. The second part considers what is needed to move beyond the shortcomings of the agenda in the region, concluding with specific and practical recommendations for action.

## *Gender and Insecurity in Latin America*

The WPS agenda has ambiguous contours in Latin America. Often portrayed as a “zone of peace,” the region continues to grapple with the consequences of unconventional armed violence.<sup>3</sup> With only 8 percent of the world’s population, Latin America hosts one-quarter of all global homicides.<sup>4</sup> These alarming statistics are due in large part to the presence of organized criminal groups, including drug cartels, street gangs and paramilitary militias, which often engage in violent disputes for territorial and market control.

Latin American women and girls are disproportionately affected by the increasing levels of violence that ravage both urban and rural areas. Latin America is “home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world”<sup>5</sup> and to the highest global rate of sexual violence against women.<sup>6</sup> In Brazil, the largest and most populated country in the region, a woman is raped every 11 minutes.<sup>7</sup> These patterns of violence historically intersect with a range of postcolonial exclusions based on class, gender, race and ethnicity. Existing data on femicide in Brazil shows that between 2005 and 2015 the annual number of violent deaths of black women increased by 22 percent while the murder rate for white women fell by 7 percent.<sup>8</sup> Indigenous and rural populations also face disproportionate levels of violence, with one in every three indigenous women experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>9</sup> Their exposure to sexual and physical violence is often exacerbated by the militarization of indigenous areas and the presence of mining and other extractive activities on lands they depend on for sustenance.



Latin America is also a major source, transit and destination of human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor and domestic servitude. The UN Office on Drugs and Crimes indicates that women and girls account for the vast majority of detected victims of human trafficking in the region, mostly for sexual exploitation.<sup>10</sup> Recently, the political crisis in Venezuela has led to an increase in human trafficking within regional borders after the displacement of millions of Venezuelans to neighboring states.<sup>11</sup>

These violent situations often fall off the radar of the Security Council since they are not explicitly related to conventional armed conflicts. Indeed, the detaching of the WPS agenda from internal dimensions of violence is a longstanding global trend, which arguably draws on the traditional divide maintained within the United Nations between the human rights and security agendas. In Latin America, the disconnect between these agendas must also be understood against the backdrop of recurrent episodes of colonial and postcolonial interventionist policies by great powers. Perhaps not surprisingly, the very few countries in the region that have developed NAPs focus on defense and foreign policy initiatives, avoiding as much external scrutiny as possible over their domestic and regional security challenges. In these documents, efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence, for example, only apply to foreign subjects located in traditional conflict situations, perpetuating conventional WPS rationales that project insecurity externally.

As a result, WPS frameworks have failed to address a regional dimension. Despite Chilean and Argentine efforts to include WPS issues in the negotiation agenda of the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas and other regional fora, debates on how to advance the agenda in the region remain scarce. Regional security debates undertaken at the Organization of American States, for instance, have often adopted a “bifurcated approach” that disconnects the WPS commitments from issues of public security.<sup>12</sup> Instead of pursuing a broad understanding of women’s insecurity, this approach continues to discourage attention from the continuum of violence against women, thus failing to capture how the agenda can be interpreted and made relevant to the national and regional contexts.

The difficulty in moving beyond the war/peace dichotomy entrenched in more conventional WPS formulations helps explain why the agenda has so easily evaporated at the regional level and failed to take root in Latin American states. Although UNSCR 1325 may not explicitly address situations other than war, WPS norms are “expected to [...] transform gender power relations” through a human security paradigm that acknowledges the economic, social and political gendered dimensions of peace.<sup>13</sup> UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1889 (2009) and 2122 (2013), for example, advanced more comprehensive perspectives connecting security concerns with the eradication of inequalities and the strengthening of human rights norms. The transformative potential of the WPS agenda in Latin America should build on these entry points through new ideas and practices that further expand on these developments. This ambitious goal will require long-term as well as short-term strategies, which will be further explored below.

## *Accelerating WPS Implementation in Latin America*

This section fleshes out common actionable strategies that can be explored across the region to accelerate WPS implementation. These recommendations require sustained political will, sufficient resources and broad civil society participation.

The WPS agenda has so far privileged global norms diffused through standardized policies that have left structural inequalities unaddressed and their gendered security implications unexplored. This gap calls for the creation of multi-stakeholder fora to spur critical debates on the relevance of the agenda at the national and regional levels. These fora should stimulate debates on how WPS frameworks can advance gender-sensitive policies on key security challenges, including urban violence, human trafficking, mass displacement and natural disasters. Such initiatives can provide platforms for sharing knowledge and experiences and developing capacity on WPS-related frameworks through workshops, trainings and awareness-raising activities. The fact that Canada and Uruguay are co-chairing the WPS Focal Points Network in 2020 provides a unique opportunity both for increased regional cooperation and for building an Americas perspective on WPS. This is also a key opportunity to build on good practices, such as expanding existing networks of women mediators and women human rights defenders to the regional level.

Achieving WPS transformative goals requires more than just the expansion of thematic debates and the addition of new areas of concern. In the next decade, WPS policies should attend to the development of intersectional methodologies, which take seriously how women's insecurities are shaped by class, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, creed and sexuality. Measures to build more effective policies in this direction should take into account bottom-up initiatives that help civil society actors take ownership of the agenda. When developing and implementing NAPs, governments often focus on national-level policies and machineries, neglecting the need for more local-level initiatives. A key strategy is thus to invest in localization programs involving local governments, traditional leaders and women's grassroots organizations. Local action plans have been developed in Colombian municipalities and can serve as models for other countries in the region.

Considering that lack of resources weakens the operationalization of WPS commitments and makes them more vulnerable to political changes, the development of mechanisms to fund WPS programs and to monitor budget allocation is vital to ensure the fulfillment of and continued support to the agenda. These mechanisms can be funded by national, regional and international agencies and donors. Financial and capacity-building support from the latter, however, is going to be particularly relevant in the next decade considering the economic and political crisis affecting countries in the region, which will be aggravated by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Finally, at the national level, the creation of interinstitutional coordination structures can also play a critical role in the harmonization of WPS initiatives with gender policies already in place. These mechanisms are critical for forging constant interaction among key stakeholders involved in WPS implementation processes, allowing them to share experiences and information while avoiding the "departmentalization" of their tasks and duplication of efforts.

## **Conclusion**

The 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 is a major opportunity to accelerate the implementation of the WPS in Latin America over the next decade. This essay has identified key opportunities and challenges in this regard. By putting forward specific recommendations, our purpose is to support a more active, effective regional engagement with WPS principles and consequently to reduce the gap between the rhetorical commitments and the operationalization of the agenda at the national and regional levels. Our recommendations highlight the need for supporting the development of new commitments and priorities through strategies that can be undertaken at the regional, national and subnational levels. They include, for example, the creation and support of regional networks and fora that can spur innovative, grounded interpretations of the agenda. The expansion of the agenda toward nontraditional WPS areas of concern, which acknowledge the diversity of women's lived insecurities in the region, is also crucial to spawn more fundamental change. These recommendations are achievable with sustained political will, sufficient resources and meaningful civil society participation. While ambitious, they offer essential milestones on the path to a more equitable vision of peace.

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# *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in ASEAN: Progress, Gaps and Ways Forward*

**Muhammad Ammar Hidayatulloh**

**T**he women, peace and security agenda has gained notable standing in global politics over the last two decades. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is a remarkable breakthrough in international peace and security agenda, as it recognizes that women and children are the most adversely affected by armed conflict and reaffirms the importance of women's role in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. At the regional level, the implementation of the WPS agenda is marked through regional action plans (RAPs). In Southeast Asia, efforts to advance the WPS agenda have occurred only recently, after the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN in 2017.<sup>1</sup> As UNSCR 1325 celebrates 20 years since its inception, it is important to identify and evaluate its achievements, including what steps must be taken to ensure full implementation. To contribute to this global effort, this essay discusses the promotion, though not necessarily the implementation, of the WPS agenda in ASEAN, including progress and gaps. I then make recommendations for ensuring that the WPS agenda is fully realized in the member states of ASEAN.

ASEAN has been progressive in advancing human rights and women's rights in the region, including through its creation of the ASEAN Community. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) were each established under the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Despite this organizational progress, the WPS agenda did not reach ASEAN until 2017. Until recently, ASEAN tended to frame women's issues only in the context of its sociocultural and economic sectors.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, ASEAN has made no specific commitment to address the impacts of armed conflict on sexual violence against women.<sup>3</sup> More broadly, women's issues and gender mainstreaming remain neglected as part of regional politics and security policies due to elite mind-sets that position women as apolitical.<sup>4</sup>

Progress on the WPS agenda in ASEAN began with the adoption of the joint statement in 2017. Since then, numerous remarkable efforts have advanced the WPS agenda in the region. In April 2018, the first ASEAN-Australia Women, Peace and Security Dialogue was conducted.<sup>5</sup> Under the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR), ASEAN established on December 13 the same year the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR), a pool of experts who provide capacity building for women as peacebuilders and support the integration of gender perspectives in conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies.<sup>6</sup> The following year, three important agendas emerged, including the adoption of a Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF);<sup>7</sup> the first AWPR Meeting as part of the first Regional Symposium on Implementing Women, Peace and Security Agenda, held in Phnom Penh;<sup>8</sup> and ASEAN Women Interfaith Dialogue, held in Jakarta.<sup>9</sup> Each of these efforts demonstrate the consistent advance of the WPS agenda in ASEAN.

What this progress does tell us and what does it not? And more crucially, what can be done next to ensure the full implementation of the WPS agenda in ASEAN? Certainly, the joint statement represents an important milestone. It indicates stronger political will among ASEAN elites to make women, peace and security part of an ASEAN agenda. This statement suggests a change in elites' understanding of women's role in maintaining peace and security.

In late 2017, during the peak of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, President Joko Widodo sent Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on a peaceful mission to Rakhine State for the purpose of providing humanitarian assistance to the victims and to prevent further escalation of the crisis.<sup>10</sup> This prominent presence of a woman leader from an ASEAN member government expanded opportunities for women to be involved in peacekeeping missions, including by increasing the number of female peacekeepers in Blue Helmet units.<sup>11</sup> This change of ASEAN leaders' mind-set in turn leverages new opportunities for the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community, including the ASEAN Political-Security Community. For example, during the 7th ASEAN Peacekeeping Centre Network (APCN) meeting in 2019, ASEAN defense ministers discussed the WPS agenda alongside the ASEAN regional security architecture and the importance of building standard centres on gender-equality training in security activities.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, through ASEAN-led mechanisms such as ARF, ASEAN can take a lead in promoting the WPS agenda across the Indo-Pacific region.

Despite the vibrant progress of the WPS agenda in ASEAN, countless actions are needed to ensure the full participation of women in peace and security. As of January 2020, there were only two ASEAN countries with National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementing UNSCR 1325: the Philippines and Indonesia.<sup>13</sup> Also, a huge gap remains between the effort of ASEAN to promote the WPS agenda and policies of ASEAN member nations. Regrettably, the joint statement fails to explicitly encourage member states to establish a NAP. Without cohesion between regional and national policies, the WPS agenda will only be a mirage in ASEAN.

Although the joint statement is important for ASEAN, it is premature to consider it to be an ASEAN regional action plan. The statement's use of word "promotion" instead of "implementation" is problematic. These words convey different meanings that signify different courses of action. While "promotion" is understood as an activity that encourages people to believe in the value or importance of something, "implementation" is defined as the act of making something that has been officially decided start to happen or be used.<sup>14</sup> The use of the word "promotion" is not common in the context of the WPS agenda, especially when compared with the other RAPs. Thus, by using "promotion," the statement can be portrayed as demonstrating negligence on the part of ASEAN and a failure to commit to fully implementing the WPS agenda. Yet ASEAN's statement can be understood as an initial move toward the WPS agenda, and thus the word "promotion" is perhaps more palatable in this context.

Although the joint statement has generally addressed the four pillars of the WPS agenda—participation, conflict prevention, protection, relief and recovery—it does not take into account all WPS-related UNSC resolutions.<sup>15</sup> It recognizes only four: UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), though now there are 10 resolutions in total.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, ASEAN's joint statement does not recognize the role of civil society in the WPS agenda, meaning ASEAN does not fully translate the UNSCR 1325 into its regional policy. UNSCR 1325 is noted as the first international law to recognize the inclusion of nonstate actors in the peace process by supporting local women's peace initiatives.<sup>17</sup> At this point in time, the joint statement should be considered a starting point for ASEAN's transformative pathway to further implementing the WPS agenda across the region.

Ultimately, ASEAN can implement the WPS agenda in this new decade by taking three actions.

First, ASEAN needs to develop a feasible regional action plan. There are several points that ASEAN leaders should take into account in formulating such a plan. First, the plan should encompass all WPS resolutions to ensure that all pillars of the WPS agenda are addressed. To keep the RAP updated and compliant with the WPS resolutions is crucial in building and strengthening the capacity of ASEAN to effectively implement the WPS agenda. Because the majority of ASEAN countries do not have a NAP, the RAP should support all member states in establishing national policies, with the RAP itself providing a legal basis for each member's national plan. The Philippines and Indonesia could lead the process and share lessons learned and best practices based on their own plans. Such an approach will ensure coherence between national and regional policies. The RAP should include civil society in its implementation. In ASEAN, civil society has played an important role in regional development, including in peace processes. For example, the Women's League of Burma (WLB), which consists of 13 women's ethnic organizations and is based in Myanmar, has committed to promote women's

participation in the national peace and reconciliation process.<sup>18</sup> WLB has also significantly contributed toward increasing women's representation in Myanmar's parliament, including by conducting political training for women and lending support to women candidates.<sup>19</sup>

Second, ASEAN should make use of existing institutions within the ASEAN Community framework to implement the WPS agenda. The ASEAN Secretariat should play a key role in mainstreaming the WPS agenda across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community through dialogues and workshops. The AICHR and ACWC are also central to the WPS agenda, as these commissions monitor and evaluate the promotion and protection of women's rights as well as engaging with the public to increase the awareness of the WPS agenda. In collaboration with AWPR and with support from AIPR, APCN should provide more training for women peacekeepers in the region. Since ASEAN peacekeepers—except for Lao PDR and Singapore—made up nearly 5 percent of total UN Peacekeeping Operations, ASEAN can also contribute to advancing the WPS agenda as it helps maintain international peace and security.<sup>20</sup>

Third, ASEAN should intensify cooperation with its partners, the United Nations, and other multilateral organizations to support implementation of the WPS agenda. The first ASEAN-Australia dialogue on WPS in 2018 and the first Regional Symposium on WPS in 2019 (which was supported by the United States) are noteworthy initiatives that ASEAN should continue to pursue. Through such initiatives, ASEAN and its partners are able to share lessons learned and best practices for WPS implementation. Such initiatives may provide constructive input for development of an ASEAN RAP. ASEAN-led mechanisms such as ARF are also an important asset for ASEAN to become a norm entrepreneur of the WPS agenda in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, ASEAN, in cooperation with the United Nations, should build and strengthen the capacity of ASEAN women peacekeepers to integrate gender perspectives into peace processes.

To conclude, ASEAN has challenged its traditional approach on women's role in its peace and security agenda, as indicated by the adoption of its joint statement in 2017. While the joint statement is relatively recent, the WPS agenda in ASEAN has progressed vigorously. However, ASEAN needs to constantly strive to close the gaps on the implementation. A failure to recognize all WPS resolutions and the exclusion of civil society from the peace process are among the limitations of the existing statement. This essay offers three recommendations for ASEAN to move the WPS agenda forward in this new decade: developing a regional action plan that encourages member states to establish national plans and recognizes the role of civil society in the peace process; leveraging existing ASEAN in implementing the WPS agenda; and strengthening its relationships with its partners and international organizations. The implementation of these recommendations will ensure that the WPS agenda continues to advance across the region.

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# 1325 and Beyond: Ways Forward for the United Nations

Esther Luigi

We see a shadow pandemic growing, of violence against women,” said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in an official statement on 6 April.<sup>1</sup> As domestic violence rises with each new country going into lockdown due to COVID-19, it is clear that we are still a long way from achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality.<sup>2</sup> The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in October 2000 constituted a landmark moment in this journey. Despite notable progress, especially in terms of visibility and discourse, the implementation of the resolution has been uneven, and many of the issues pertaining to women’s participation, protection, conflict prevention and relief it sought to address remain unresolved.

The UN Women Global Study (2015) evaluating the impact of UNSCR 1325 highlighted that most of the Security Council’s work in this domain had focused on protection of women rather than on prevention or political participation.<sup>3</sup> It also identified lack of sufficient funding as the single largest obstacle to the implementation of the resolution’s commitments.<sup>4</sup> As such, those three issues have been given particular consideration when formulating proposals on how to move forward the objectives of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda in the next decade. Most of the recommendations are for the United Nations, though selected ones also target state governments and civil society actors.

## *Linking Gender Sensitivity to Security Council Nonpermanent Membership*

The successes of the past 20 years make it clear that the Security Council holds much power in bringing forward the WPS agenda. However, its capacity to act and the scope of the actions it can undertake are always conditional on the voices of the member states, especially the 5 permanent members (P5) and the 10 nonpermanent members. WPS issues are and remain a hotly contested political topic, which does not sit easily with the state-based structure of the council.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, most progress has been made when given countries decided to take ownership of the issue: Namibia played a key role in the adoption of UNSCR 1325, while Germany used its council presidency in April 2019 to provide all council members with language on WPS to guide briefings and deliberations.<sup>6</sup>

Giving countries that champion the WPS agenda a voice in the council is thus crucial to move the agenda forward. Making a country’s track record on gender equality and WPS issues a factor of consideration in the election of the nonpermanent Security Council members could ensure that the WPS agenda becomes a reality.

This idea is likely to encounter pushback from some member states. Currently, the main concern over the election of nonpermanent members by the General Assembly is appropriate geographical representation. But representation could be maintained while WPS champions within each region are given first consideration. The existence and advancement of a National Action Plan could be used as a baseline criterion for evaluating governments’ domestic engagement with the WPS agenda. The combination of gender and geography would ensure better representation of the great variety of gendered experiences of peace and conflict across the world.

A first step toward the realization of this proposal could be the creation of a working group, on the model of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, established by A/RES/48/26 in December 1993. Alternatively, the focus of the existing group could be shifted to include both geographical and



gender-based representation. In this new or modified group, the emphasis should be firmly placed on *gender*, and not simply on women: This emphasis will not only help bring reluctant countries on board but also give weight to rights-based arguments for gender equality by highlighting the way in which patriarchy affects both women and men in conflict and peace.

A working group could significantly advance the WPS agenda in two ways. First, it would create a strong incentive for states to make progress on WPS issues. In rewarding progress, it would create a sense of accountability that is currently lacking and build up normative pressure for change.<sup>7</sup> Second and most important, having more support for the WPS agenda within the council would allow for substantial progress. For instance, mentioning gendered provisions in a peacekeeping mission mandate could be made compulsory, which in turn would mean that it has to be budgeted for.<sup>8</sup> Increased access to the UNSC for briefings could also be granted to relevant civil society actors such as local women's organizations. This access would improve council members' understanding of WPS issues and help move away from a state-centric focus, which limits what UNSCR 1325 can achieve.<sup>9</sup>

## ***A New Sustainable and Targeted Funding Model for the WPS Agenda***

Funds for the WPS agenda are not only insufficient, they often fail to come at crucial moments (such as in the period of immediate post-conflict recovery) and to reach the actors who need it the most: only 0.2 percent of the bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected situations over the period 2016–17, for example, went directly to women's organizations.<sup>10</sup>

### ***1. Making WPS Funding Sustainable by Overcoming Short-Term Commitments and Reducing Donor Reliance***

When funding is available, it is too often project based and donor driven.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, funding is often lacking for long-term thinking and activities, while priorities remain driven by donors' agendas. A further consequence is that women's organizations spend disproportionate time and resources reporting on their activities and progress.

To turn this around is not easy. In order to increase long-term funding for WPS issues, a concerted effort is required:

- a. Create a UN Women Banking initiative, on the model of and in partnership with the UNEP Finance Initiative, to encourage banks to make investments that do not have a detrimental impact on women's lives around the globe, with divestment from the arms industry as a key principle;
- b. Integrate the existing Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarianism into this new initiative, with the double aim to strengthen it and improve its visibility;
- c. Apply state-of-the-art financing methods to the WPS field, for example, by developing microcredit mechanisms;
- d. Promote, wherever possible, the interlinkage of security, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian budgets within a flexible common framework. This fiscal focus should allow for targeting specific needs and issues, create continuity in funding, and ensure that complex problems—and their gendered dimensions—are targeted as a whole. Strengthened cooperation between relevant UN agencies (and missions, where appropriate) would be key.

The first two points tackle the structure of the existing financial system, which causes and sustains gender inequality and conflict in the first place. The effort to diminish investments in the arms industry is also in keeping with the original purpose and spirit of the WPS agenda, which was a pacifist movement.

As a whole, this proposal would reduce the reliance of WPS funding on donors and increase long-term funding possibilities while keeping priority-setting independent. The increase of long-term funding would significantly expand the progress that can be made on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the two areas that most often fall victim to the availability of only short-term funding, fueling conflict relapses.

## 2. Directing Sustainable Funding the Right Way

Of course, an essential consideration about funding, beyond sheer numbers, is identifying beneficiaries. First, the GAI has already made a step in the right direction by increasing the amount of funding directly available to local, grassroots women's organizations. These organizations should be the primary beneficiaries of all funding earmarked for gender, peace and security, as they would benefit from funding in a concrete, immediate way. Wherever appropriate, the United Nations should also consider funding protection for women's rights advocates who may need it.

Second, more funding should be directed toward supporting the efforts of women engaged in track 2 diplomacy and informal peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. Funding these efforts would not only help realize the objectives of UNSCR 1325 but would give visibility to women already engaged in such efforts.

Third, more funding should be directed toward *qualitative* research into women, peace and security, and this research should be given full consideration as scientific evidence in Security Council briefings. Currently, quantitative evidence receives the greatest emphasis in most research on WPS issues and the most attention from UN agencies, the Security Council and national governments.<sup>12</sup> While quantitative research provides important insights and gives weight to "use-value" arguments used to promote the WPS agenda (to donors in particular), it cannot alone create a full understanding of the gendered dimensions of peace, conflict and security. Although UN and civil society actors with the required financial capacity could participate in this effort, the key actors to realize this proposal are national governments, which could integrate this recommendation into the latest (or in some case, first) version of their National Action Plans.

### *A New Landmark Resolution Connecting the WPS Agenda with Environmental Concerns*

Thinking about how to move the WPS agenda forward in the next decade also means anticipating the new challenges that lie ahead for women's peace and security around the world. There is consensus among experts that the devastating effects of climate change will increase in the coming years, disproportionately affecting women.<sup>13</sup> What has often been missing is the links between gender, climate change *and* peace and security: to name but one example, climate-change induced and gendered environmental displacement can also serve as a trigger to new conflicts.<sup>14</sup>

This essay's final recommendation is thus for the preparation and adoption of a Security Council Resolution modeled on UNSCR 1325 to address the negative impact of climate change on peace and security and highlight its highly gendered dimension.

This recommendation acknowledges the achievements that have come about as a result of UNSCR 1325, such as the creation of UN Women, as well as the importance of establishing a legal framework for the UN to be able to meaningfully (and financially) act on this threat. It aims to mainstream environmental issues into the WPS agenda in the same way that women's organizations are trying to mainstream these issues into the peace and security agenda at large. Such an integrated, intersectional approach may avoid the fragmentation that the WPS agenda has often fallen victim to and that has held back its progress.

In practical terms, the realization of this recommendation could profit from the lessons learned in the process of adopting UNSCR 1325. Notably, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security played an instrumental role in drafting and advocating for the resolution.<sup>15</sup> A network of NGOs working on women and climate justice already exists and could form the basis for one with access to the Security Council, which should highlight the interconnectedness among gender, climate change *and* peace and security.<sup>16</sup> It will also be able to build on the expertise of the Joint Program on Women, Natural Resources and Peace established in 2016 by a group of UN agencies and put to good use the platform they have created.<sup>17</sup>

Though the occasion for writing this essay and thinking about how to move the objectives of the WPS agenda forward in the next decade was meant to honor the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, this year has

unfortunately brought a much more pressing reason to do so: the coronavirus pandemic. With the majority of the global health care workforce made up of women and with domestic violence on the rise, it is already clear that the pandemic is not gender blind.<sup>18</sup> Politically, it has also made the need for international cooperation in the face of global threats plain for all to see. More than ever, the WPS agenda is needed. And if the current global political system is to be rethought, women should play a central role in doing so.

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# *Dismantling Structural Prejudices that Promote Gender Inequality: Overturning a Culture of Violence against Women in Nigeria*

**Itodo Samuel Anthony**

***“It is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern conflicts.”***

*Major General Patrick Cammaert, former UN Commander in the DRC*

Recently a video went viral in Nigerian social media: Two soldiers had recorded themselves threatening to rape the “wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters” of the men of the city of Warri and infect them with HIV/AIDS in retaliation for the alleged murder of a soldier by some community youths. The brazenness of their threats while in state-assigned uniforms was shocking. This is Warri in peacetime. One does not need to stretch the imagination far to visualize what these soldiers would be capable of during armed conflicts.

Violence against women during or after armed conflict has been reported in every war zone, with rape and other sexual violence often used to humiliate the enemy. For perspective, “during the Rwandan genocides of the Hutus and Tutsis, an estimated 50 percent of women were raped.”<sup>1</sup> Women in Nigeria are hit hardest in the conflicts that have ravaged the country in recent times, many of them subjected to horrific sexual violence, related HIV infection, involuntary pregnancies, increased food insecurity and internal displacement. With the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and the herdsmen crisis in the north central region, Nigeria has seen the abduction of girls, murder, rape, internal displacement, and recruitment of women as suicide bombers, sex slaves and forced laborers.<sup>2</sup>

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and other instruments have been developed at the international, regional and national levels to protect women and girls from violence in times of peace and war. However, many of these instruments have not been very effective on the ground because they focus on implementation at a high level of governance, with legislation and policy formulation largely ignoring a fundamental root of violence against women—patriarchal and social constructs that diminish women’s place in society.

Despite achievements in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 through UN initiatives and national action plans, there are limited changes at the macrosocial level, as these resolutions sidestep structural issues that undermine gender mainstreaming. The institutionalized prejudices in many patriarchal societies like Nigeria manifest in the form of violence against women, in peace and in wartime, as well as in systemic marginalization, which limits women from participating fully and equally in peace and security decisions, particularly in formal negotiations and peacemaking processes.<sup>3</sup>

While UNSCR 1325 and other similar policy documents can be potent tools for women, it is time to shift focus to combating, at the grassroots level, the religious, cultural and social values that promote gender inequality and violence against women. I propose a model of action that focuses on young people, who are still amenable to changing socially ingrained values that catalyze violence against women and doing revolution from the ground up.

## ***Nigeria’s Position on Women, Peace and Security***

Nigeria is signatory to several instruments on the protection of the rights of women and girls, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol of 2003), UNSCR 1325, and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against

Women. Domestically, Nigeria has instituted the National Gender Policy of 2006, the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP, of 2015), Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law of 2007, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions. The NAP was first launched in 2013, with an updated one in 2017 to cover 2017–20. Implementation remains a challenge.<sup>4</sup>

The overall goal of Nigeria's national action plan is anchored on the following priorities: increased political empowerment for women and engagement at all levels of decision making, a more effective and credible justice and security environment for women during and after conflict and allocation of greater and more sustainable financial resources to support women in recovery processes.<sup>5</sup> The plan's areas of focus, termed the 5 Pillars, are: prevention, participation, protection, prosecution and promotion.

### *Addressing Patriarchy and Social Constructs*

The patriarchal nature of several societies, including Nigeria's, promotes violence against women and girls and constricts their roles. In such a culture, a senator can threaten a woman colleague with rape on the floor of the Senate during a policy debate, even though the woman is a colleague of "equal standing." The son of the governor of a state in Nigeria, while arguing with someone on Twitter, threatened to arrange for his antagonist's mother and sister to be gang-raped. Recently, I heard that certain teenagers on finishing high school planned to rape female classmates as a "parting gift."

Women and girls suffer the greatest violence during conflicts, yet wars do not suddenly turn men into rapists. There was already a tendency toward violence against women in such men, and conflicts merely present a fertile arena to express that tendency. This mind-set should be dismantled. To change the narrative on the roles of women in society, advocates for women should focus on the young, with the following strategies:

- **Introduce gender and peace studies into the curriculum.** Such study can be a powerful tool for promoting appropriate gender education and unlearning harmful socialization. To deepen learning, young people working in teams should come up with interventions within their communities to mitigate violence against women and girls.
- **Form gender and peace clubs across secondary schools.** These groups could help raise awareness of instruments like UNSCR 1325. Most people, but especially the women and girls these tools are designed to protect, are not aware of its provisions. Young people in these groups would have regular conversations on peace, security and violence against women to create a much-needed consciousness of women's rights and roles in society.
- **Set up school parliaments and courts for conflict resolution.** These parliaments should have adequate representation from boys and girls, and they can both deliberate issues around peace and security and resolve school-based conflicts. Implementing partners can use these youth parliaments, with their gender balance, to normalize having women's voices alongside men's from a young age. Essay competitions and debates on the theme of violence against women across secondary schools would also help to popularize the resolutions and actively engage young people.
- **Form peace and security focus groups at the community level.** Civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations, working with local government authorities, can set up peace and security focus groups of young boys and girls at the community level. These groups would raise awareness of UN resolutions protecting women and girls against violence, foster advocacy against violence toward women and girls and act as a reporting and feedback channel, linking victims of gender-based violence to the appropriate authorities for actions to be taken, especially in rural areas. Periodic debates at the community level on issues of peace and security can be organized through this platform to help evaluate structures that promote violence against women and move to dismantle them.
- **Use a social credit model to promote peace and security.** To get young people—male and female—actively involved in promoting peace and security at the community level, a social credit model can be implemented to reward and motivate their participation. I have successfully used this model to get students

actively involved in environmental protection and community volunteering. Students are allocated points for carrying out activities such as raising awareness of climate change and planting trees. These credits are accumulated on a ledger board, and students convert them into tangible rewards: a place on an excursion, textbooks, or tuition fee discounts, for example. This program generated a frenzy of student activity that ultimately helped instill the desired values. A similar community program would allow boys and girls to accumulate credits for active involvement in gender equality, peace and security promotion, provision of reporting and feedback to appropriate authorities, and setting up initiatives that tackle violence against women and girls. This program will create a more pragmatic local awareness of the resolutions than adding several more documents and policies at the national and international levels.

- **Set up local gender and peace courts and train security personnel.** Violations against the rights of women and girls need special courts for rapid dispensation of justice, as delayed penalties typically erode their severity in the eyes of parties involved and risk too easily have offenses swept under the rug. Without perpetrators being seen to receive punishment, the culture of violence against women will only be perpetuated. Security personnel typically treat issues of rape and violence against women with levity, many times terming them “family matters” to be resolved at home. This attitude emboldens violators and furthers the culture of violence against women, which we now see mirrored in a Nigerian senator’s brazen public threat to rape a woman.

It has been two decades since member states unanimously adopted the UNSCR 1325 as a seminal tool in addressing the violence women and girls face in armed conflict. While Nigeria developed a national action plan, the situation of many Nigerian women is not much changed. Women’s participation in the peace and security process is still mostly rhetoric. More often than not, women are allowed to participate in formal peace processes infrequently and usually for cosmetic purposes, to present an image of inclusiveness. Fundamental values, anchored in patriarchal structural injustices that relegate women to second-class citizenship, need organic change from the grassroots. By helping young people unlearn these negative values and involving them actively in the gender equality and peace and security process, Nigeria can raise a generation that will not need UN instruments to instruct them to treat women with fairness.

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# *The Third Awakening: The Decade of SHE Politics*

Chelsea Cohen

Peace and security may mean different things to different people. For me, it is the confidence to walk in my neighborhood and enter public spaces without fear of sexual violence. It is the assurance that a police or military officer who is mandated to protect the public will do just that and not harm me or others. Peace and security encompass safety in society and in economic life. For many women, especially those living in conflict-affected countries in Africa, the solutions to insecurities they face lay in their increased participation in decision making around peace and security.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the accompanying Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda have attempted to highlight the importance of women in international security. They address how conflict differentially affects women and girls and recognize the critical role that women can play in peacebuilding.<sup>1</sup> Since the establishment of UNSCR 1325, women have gained more positions of influence both globally and in Africa. Yet women are not yet at the forefront of formal international peace and security negotiations. The lack of progress raises concerns that organizations are filling quotas instead of systematically including women.

The Covid-19 pandemic complicates the picture, as it affects high- and low-income economies alike, places added pressure on already-strained politics and economies and thus risks escalating gender-based violence. Lockdowns have increased domestic violence incidents globally. In China, the number of domestic violence cases reported to the local police has tripled since February.<sup>2</sup> South Africa saw 2,320 such complaints during the first week of the lockdown,<sup>3</sup> 37 percent greater than the weekly average in 2019. With no foreseeable end to the pandemic and rising unemployment, the needs of women, as integral parts of their communities and economies, must be addressed.

UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda are crucial documents in the campaign to reduce and prevent conflict and violence. There is an empirical link between the security of women and the stability of nations.<sup>4</sup> Nations with higher levels of social, economic and political gender equality are more stable and less likely to rely on military force to settle disputes. Even when they become involved in international crises and disputes, nations with higher levels of gender equality display lower levels of violence. In post-conflict settings, women's direct participation in peace negotiations is linked to an increase in the sustainability and the quality of peace.<sup>5</sup>

Governments implicitly recognized this intrinsic link between women's well-being and that of their nations when they unanimously adopted UNSCR 1325 20 years ago. But to date, only 83 countries have developed follow-up national actions plans (NAPs), of which only 28 countries have allocated budgets for implementation.<sup>6</sup> An important component of UNSCR 1325 is the inclusion of women in peace processes. Yet between 1992 and 2018, women constituted only 13 percent of negotiators, 3 percent of mediators and 4 percent of signatories to major peace processes tracked by the Council on Foreign Relations. The vast majority of peace agreements do not address gender: In 2018, only 4 out of 52 agreements contained gender-related provisions, according to UN Women.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the UN Security Council, in conjunction with the African Union and civil society organizations, must act to enhance African women's participation in peace processes. While there has been marked improvement, challenges still impede women's involvement. These challenges include women's lack of access to formal employment as mediators. In some cases, women lack sufficient, sustainable funding to support peace processes directly or indirectly. Others lack capacity and experience in mediating conflicts, which locks them

out of mediation opportunities. There are insufficient numbers of trained women mediators in most African countries. Where they exist, they are mostly involved at the grassroots and in local mediation efforts but absent in high-profile mediation or negotiations.

As one observer explained, women must be politically appointed to ambassadorships or diplomatic positions: “Otherwise most women who have had some formal schooling are often placed in administrative positions, and the ones who have not been able to attend school are used as political ‘hand clappers,’ ” where they are not likely to gain much influence or make a difference.

The African Union typically maintains a low profile in negotiations, mainly providing support to special representatives who have received mandates to mediate. This creates a barrier to appointing women to top leadership positions and highlights the need for rethinking whether it is most effective to use mainly former heads of state and politically influential women as mediators.

The pandemic could reverse progress that has been made on gender equality, given that nearly 60 percent of the world’s women work in the informal economy and thus are at greater risk of falling into poverty. As economies close down, millions of women’s jobs will disappear. At the same time, young girls have not been attending school due to closures. These factors are sidelining efforts to secure women’s rights and denying them opportunities. Gender equality and women’s rights are essential to overcoming the effects of this pandemic.

In these times, UNSCR 1325 remains relevant in its calls for change in the way women are considered, especially in Africa, and for the equal participation of women in national, regional and international decisionmaking regarding conflict resolution and peacebuilding. I propose that the following be considered to improve attainment of UNSCR 1325 objectives:

- More member states should adopt NAPs and allocate budgets for their implementation. Given the pandemic’s potential to increase violence against women and girls, women should be the forefront of implementation.
- Africa needs to boost national health expenditures to contain the spread of Covid-19, help the hardest-hit sectors, improve women’s lives and stimulate domestic consumption. To achieve these goals, the continent’s central banks should cut interest rates and channel liquidity to firms and households. Spending measures should be implemented transparently and be monitored by independent fiscal councils. The UN Security Council and the AU heads of state and government should mobilize a response equivalent to the 10 percent of the GDP its AU member states, with assistance from central banks and development banks. Continentwide free trade would be a holistic, helpful response so that the women-dominated informal sector can sell what they produce across the continent. Eliminating bilateral tariffs and all nontariff barriers on goods and services within Africa and reducing other barriers to cross-border trade would generate \$134 billion per year, or 4.5 percent of African GDP.<sup>8</sup>
- Women leaders need to be at the forefront of decisionmaking. Task teams should include women leaders from communities and civil society to promote community engagement and leadership, thus expanding social safety nets. In communities where many women share homes with their abusers and struggle to access strapped social services, women can lead in encouraging their communities to create safe havens for endangered women.
- Going forward, women need capacity training. Active participation of women mediators is dependent on their gaining negotiation and mediation skills. This training can be achieved through partnerships with the private sector, which provides 9 out of 10 jobs in developing countries.<sup>9</sup> By investing in programs that build women’s skills, there is huge potential for the private sector to make a difference. Partnerships with commercial banks to fund leadership programs for women in which they learn to negotiate and engage in political analysis are a critical way to help women attain positions of influence.
- Investing in women’s economic participation, including through entrepreneurship, is often crucial for the stability of the fragile economies of conflict-affected societies—and for the stability of the private sector too. Tax credits should be offered for companies that participate in social development programs. Partnerships with universities could allow students to obtain academic credit for participating in research or community conflict resolution efforts.



- Government and international organizations, especially those in Africa, should broaden their applicant pool and hire women with backgrounds in peace and conflict studies. There needs to be more room for career diplomats to advance women so they do not seek employment elsewhere. Civil society organizations can employ women to assist with conflict resolution in low-income countries. Law clinics can schedule community programs to empower women to advocate for their rights. The African Union should involve more members in initiatives such as the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, known as FemWise-Africa, and encourage women to apply for posts.
- UNSCR 1325 is little understood. Although inroads have been made, information needs to be translated into local languages so advocates can raise awareness about the resolution and its importance.

In this 20th anniversary year of UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council, in collaboration with member states, must show outspoken leadership and renewed support for gender equality and the WPS agenda—asserting their clear and unequivocal conviction that defending women's rights are essential to recovery from the pandemic and to building a better future for everyone.

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# How the Private Sector Can Advance UNSCR 1325 in the 2020s

Karla Drpić

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) was a watershed moment for women's rights and roles in international peace and security. It established the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which emphasizes the importance of women's participation throughout the entire cycle of armed conflict. UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS-related Security Council resolutions call on all relevant actors to advance this agenda.

However, 20 years and nine resolutions later, the role of the private sector in furthering the WPS agenda and the goals of UNSCR 1325 remains underexplored. While gender equality is a centerpiece of most corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and the importance of business for promoting peace is growing, advocates for gender, peace and business have yet to form a coherent front.

This essay argues that the private sector has enormous potential to unlock opportunities to advance UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda. In it, I argue that the private sector can be particularly valuable for advancing women's participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. After exploring current private-sector involvement in the WPS agenda, I explain why it is good for business and offer recommendations on how to advance its role in the WPS agenda throughout the 2020s.

## Private-Sector Potential and the WPS Agenda

While many businesses worldwide operate in conflict-affected areas, the potential for the private sector to make a difference around WPS remains largely untapped.<sup>1</sup> This “missing link” is puzzling for several reasons.

First, gender equality is increasingly important within the corporate world. Given that so many global businesses with strong CSR commitments operate in conflict-affected areas, their apparent lack of awareness of how investing in women's empowerment in these environments might benefit them is perplexing.

Moreover, global CSR initiatives have shown that they can react quickly to new challenges related to gender equality. For example, the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)—the world's largest corporate responsibility initiative—and the Women's Empowerment Principles have published timely recommendations for businesses to employ a “gender lens” to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, platforms that could support WPS-related corporate initiatives already exist. For example, Business for Peace (B4P) aims to harness the preexisting role of business in fragile and conflict-affected states to deepen private-sector action in support of peace.<sup>3</sup> Other platforms, like the UNGC, might also be good vehicles for driving progress on business involvement in this area.

However, conceptual links between this global CSR “infrastructure” and the WPS agenda are distinctly lacking. For example, a 2011 report on costing and financing UNSCR 1325 notes that while certain UNGC partnerships include projects on gender equality, they fail to contextually link these programs and women's empowerment to peacebuilding.<sup>4</sup>

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Progress on this matter has been slow, and there is a distinct lack of references to women or gender considerations in literature about business and peace in conflict areas. For instance, the 2010 UNGC-PRI *Guidance on Responsible Business in Conflict-Affected & High-Risk Areas* does not include any references to women. Their 2013 report *Responsible Business Advancing Peace: Examples from Companies, Investors & Global Compact Local Networks* fails to do so too.

However, certain NGOs and other institutions have made positive steps toward recognizing the importance of business for the WPS agenda. Cordaid, one of the biggest international development organizations and a member of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, supports more than 60 female-owned enterprises in some of the most fragile contexts worldwide. Similarly, the World Bank has developed several initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs to promote peace and stability.<sup>5</sup>

### **Why Advancing the WPS Agenda is Good for Business**

The business case for women's participation and leadership globally is exceptionally strong: Female-founded businesses ultimately deliver higher revenue—more than twice as much per dollar invested—than those founded by men, making women-owned companies better investments for financiers.<sup>6</sup> There is also a strong link between women's participation in the labor market and GDP growth. The World Economic Forum predicts that if the global gender gap in labor market participation is closed by 25 percent by 2025, an additional US\$5.3 trillion would be added to GDP globally.<sup>7</sup>

These findings are important for conflict-affected economies, which tend to be fragile due to the lack of foreign investment, decreased living standards, mass emigration, and increased numbers of conflict-related disabilities and fatalities. As such, war is often referred to as development in reverse,<sup>8</sup> underscoring the urgent need for GDP growth in these economies. Since studies show that women's inclusion and participation in economic life can significantly boost various economic indicators—thus accelerating post-conflict economic development and reconstruction—there is a clear business case for promoting gender equality in these areas.

On this score, business has massive potential to enact positive change. The private sector provides nine in ten jobs in developing countries,<sup>9</sup> which largely overlaps with current conflict-affected and post-conflict geographies.<sup>10</sup> Employing more women for these jobs would improve business performance and economic growth, which makes a compelling case for businesses of all kinds to advance women's empowerment in fragile areas.

For instance, multinational companies (MNCs) operating in such areas may provide employment and promotions to more women, outsource services and products to women-owned enterprises, and provide locally relevant skills training to women. Such actions can help develop more skilled, empowered workforces, benefiting both employers and communities. For example, a graduate of Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Women Initiative program, who runs a brick manufacturing company in Kigali, Rwanda, primarily hires local women and has invested in a water pump for her community.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, stability is good for business, and studies have shown that countries with higher levels of gender equality are more stable.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, investing in gender equality in conflict-affected areas is not only an excellent way for MNCs to show their commitment to CSR on a global level, but it is also likely to create more positive business environments, thereby attracting investment and creating more business opportunities.

Empowering women by involving them in business activities during post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding may also build lasting societal stability, starting from the family unit. Economically empowered women can financially support their families, divert family members from conflict-related work opportunities, and reduce rates of domestic violence. International Alert's Living with Dignity project in Tajikistan, which aims to build a socioeconomic environment that empowers women and protects them from sexual and gender-based violence, is a good example of this. It found that women's earnings have increased fourfold since they started their own businesses as part of the project, and the percentage of women who report experiencing violence has decreased by 31 percent.<sup>13</sup>



The private sector can foster female entrepreneurship and contribute to the development of the local economy. For instance, Tupperware Brands' Global Links Program helps Iraqi women develop technical and business skills. This project thus enables women to run their businesses more effectively but also to spread this knowledge to other female business owners.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, if women are empowered economically, they can increase their political negotiating power in reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts.<sup>15</sup> This increased economic power could directly contribute to one of the key objectives of UNSCR 1325: "ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict."

## **Outlook for the 2020s**

The private sector can powerfully advance the objectives of 1325 and the WPS agenda more broadly. Moreover, the generational shift in attitudes toward CSR bodes well for implementing more meaningful, comprehensive corporate initiatives to promote WPS.

According to PwC's *Millennials at Work*, the millennial generation will form half of the global workforce by 2020, and 88 percent of millennials prefer to work in companies that emphasize CSR.<sup>16</sup> As this generation is promoted into positions of power, they are likely to push for change in their companies' CSR practices. Corporate initiatives aiming to advance the WPS agenda could be a metaphorical gold mine for companies that already operate in conflict-affected areas and who want to improve their CSR performance in the 2020s and beyond.

There are several reasons this could be the case. First, advancing a worthy cause like WPS might be personally and professionally gratifying to the majority of the global workforce, PwC's report suggests. Second, private-sector initiatives that explicitly focus on WPS are rare, and companies that start developing and implementing such initiatives may be recognized as innovators, raising their profile and motivating more companies to join the cause. Finally, this year's 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development establish a highly symbolic 10-year period between 2020 and 2030 for companies to engage more in global causes that have not seen much progress.

## **Conclusion**

Twenty years on, advancement of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda remains slow on several fronts, including in the private sector. Global CSR platforms and practitioners have failed to recognize how the private sector might empower women in conflict-affected areas.

Most of these areas need economic growth urgently. As the main employers in many conflict-affected areas worldwide, the private sector plays a key role. Moreover, the private sector could accelerate and strengthen growth by increasing women's participation in the labor market and committing to their empowerment. Evidence suggests that such initiatives may promote post-conflict recovery of local communities, creating a stable business environment, reducing violence against women, and fostering women's political participation.

Although businesses may appear an unlikely advocate for advancing this agenda, there is a strong business case for the socially responsible millennial generation to start developing and implementing WPS-focused CSR projects within their companies throughout the 2020s and beyond. UNSCR 1325's anniversary thus presents an ideal opportunity for businesses worldwide to capitalize on their potential by helping to achieve the objectives of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda.

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# *UNSCR 1325 and Beyond: Engagement of Women in Dialogue with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups*

Tabitha W. Mwangi

**G**lobal terrorism and violent extremism remain a transnational peace and security threat.<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) recognized the role of women in countering and preventing violent extremism. At the same time, women's involvement in violent extremist groups poses a grave threat, with serious implications for security and counterterrorism strategies.<sup>2</sup> Hard-power approaches to dealing with this challenge remain unsustainable and ineffective. As such, dialogue will need to be more prevalent and the inclusion of women in negotiations more instrumental in achieving the objectives of UNSCR 1325.

I argue that deliberate inclusion of women in dialogue processes with extremist groups will be instrumental in countering terrorism and violent extremism effectively. Furthermore, it will bring women from the periphery to central positions in shaping future peace, which adding them as an afterthought cannot achieve. Token inclusion of women has been one of the main barriers to effective implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>3</sup> Given that the fields of peace, security and counterterrorism remain male dominated, engaging women more in counterterrorism presents numerous opportunities to gain unique gender perspectives on peace and security.<sup>4</sup>

Although inclusive dialogue has long been advanced as a long-term solution to countering terrorism and violent extremism, this essay looks at how women can be deliberately involved in these processes globally. I also make recommendations to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTED), which is in a unique position to advocate for the acknowledgement, recognition and appreciation of women's role in dialogue processes with violent extremist groups through engaging UN member states. Successful implementation of these recommendations would lead to successful implementation of critical aspects of the WPS agenda related to violent extremism.

## *Women, Violent Extremism and Terrorism*

I adopt Charles Townshend's definition of terrorism: "the use or threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological course of action, of serious violence against any person or property."<sup>5</sup>

Violent extremist groups are those that are motivated by a fundamental leaning toward use of violence to pursue ideological goals. Given similarities in their modus operandi, operations, links to transnational and organized crime and threats to international security, this essay will group jihadist and white supremacist groups together in this definition.<sup>6</sup>

The recent US announcement that it will recognize white supremacy violent extremists as terrorists comes after pressure from experts who assert that these groups are a grave security threat.<sup>7</sup>

*Women are involved in terrorism.* According to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index, female suicide attacks are five percent more deadly than those executed by males given their capability to circumvent security scrutiny, and they are becoming more common. About 13 percent of foreigners who joined the ISIL violent extremist group were female, some 6,900 in total. More than 4,000 women who had joined ISIL remain in the Syrian Al Hol camp awaiting potential return to their home countries, despite the security threat they pose. Some are unapologetic about their engagement with ISIL and are likely to use violence against other groups.<sup>8</sup>

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*Women play different roles in terrorist organizations.* According to Michèle Coninsx they collect intelligence and conduct surveillance on potential targets, recruit young people, carry out suicide attacks, finance terror operations and take care of group members' needs, such as cooking and cleaning.<sup>9</sup> Mia Bloom argues that women in many cases are the source of radicalization, urging others to join as part of their duty to carry out jihad.<sup>10</sup> While on one end of the spectrum, there are women who believe they should support extremist organizations by marrying other members, bearing their children, and sometimes engaging as active combatants, on the other end of the spectrum, there are women working to eradicate violent ideology, having seen firsthand its terrible effects.<sup>11</sup>

Terrorist organizations recognize and tap into women's diverse roles. Katharine Petrich and Phoebe Donnelly detail how al Qaeda affiliate al Shabaab, a terrorist group operating in the Horn of Africa and known for its strict interpretation of Islamic law, collaborates with commercial sex workers to collect intelligence from security personnel in Nairobi.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the same group punishes Somali women engaged in this profession on the basis of Islamic law.

## **Recommendations**

### **• *Involve Women in Dialogue to Bridge the Gap Between States and Violent Groups***

Because of the growing gap between state security (security of privileged elites, often in positions of economic and political authority) and human security (the aspirations of citizens to have their basic needs met, access social services, enjoy economic security and personal safety from harm), violent extremism has become more widespread.<sup>13</sup> The current approach to dealing with this security challenge—through exclusive use of force in state self-defense, as permitted by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter—has proved counterproductive and unsustainable. Thus, it is necessary to also adopt soft-power approaches such as deradicalization and reintegration of individuals who have joined extremist groups. The continued exclusive use of hard power creates cycles of violence, with disenfranchised, marginalized communities prone to engage in revenge attacks and erosion of state legitimacy because the state is seen as a source of insecurity.<sup>14</sup>

*Dialogue is effective.* As was the case in Northern Ireland, government engagement in dialogue with violent groups can lead to cessation of hostilities.<sup>15</sup> Dialogue can effectively address the root causes of conflict such as structural violence, widespread unemployment and gender inequalities, so it should not be perceived as weakness or as legitimating the activities of nonstate entities. Engagement in dialogue embodies the willingness to bridge the gap between the state and the individual, which is a step toward resolving conflict in the long term.<sup>16</sup>

UNSCR 1325 seeks to include gender perspectives in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Engagement of women in dialogue would help protect women, prevent armed conflict and increase participation of women in peace and security—all of which will contribute to countering terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>17</sup>

CTED should spearhead this process: 1) because women who feel secure are less likely to be radicalized, join extremist groups, or to become militants' brides, kidnap victims or suicide bombers, 2) because women can perceive signs of radicalization in their communities so that interventions can be made before individuals turn to violence, and 3) because involving women in dialogue ensures their continued engagement in political processes such as voting, running for political office and other forms of grassroots leadership that can influence action at the international level.<sup>18</sup>

- ***Acknowledge Women's Leadership***

Women's leadership is overlooked in many societies. Recognizing and appreciating it will be important for engaging women in dialogue. Leadership is understood in this case as the process by which leaders achieve goals, which happens when an individual shares ideas to meet specific social needs that others accept as potential solutions.<sup>19</sup>

As women are constantly negotiating for what they need, whether by pushing for revenge or an end to structural violence), they should be involved in dialogue processes.<sup>20</sup> State collaboration with women to fight violent extremism is not new, as women's role as mothers and primary care givers has been leveraged to such ends in the past.<sup>21</sup>

However, I advocate for involvement of women and engagement beyond their socially assigned gender roles as mothers and primary care givers. CTED should involve them as axis points in dialogue to ensure that gender issues are prioritized and women's needs addressed so as to resolve underlying drivers of conflict.

- ***Conduct More Research on Women and Terrorism***

Policymakers seeking to effectively deal with violent extremism must avoid oversimplification. Women are not homogenous; they have individual agency.<sup>22</sup> After identifying the right women to partner with, CTED and governments must work with them as equal partners. They must avoid pushing gender inequality to the margins of peace and security discourses or including gender perspectives or gender quotas for declaratory purposes, to meet donor requirements or out of political correctness.<sup>23</sup>

Every community exists in a unique context informed by cultural, social, geopolitical and economic factors, thus a one-size-fits-all approach to the engagement of women in dialogue would be problematic. Therefore, researchers must draft recommendations tailor-made for different stakeholders in CTED collaborations. These stakeholders should include public- and private-sector actors and civil society partners, because they have different strengths and operate in different contexts.<sup>24</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

Because women's involvement in terrorist and violent extremist groups poses grave threats to peace and security and will continue to affect counterterrorism strategies, it is important to involve women in dialogue. Dealing with the violence from extremist groups using only force remains unsustainable because of its expense and its cost in lives lost—it is also largely ineffective in preventing repeated violence.

Policymakers should draft specific recommendations for the different stakeholders with which CTED works as they involve women in dialogue with violent groups. They must avoid the assumption that women share a homogenous perspective. Moreover, they should recognize women's leadership in formal and informal spaces. Dialogue as an alternative to counterterrorism and violent extremism is worthy of exploration, in keeping with the aims of UNSCR 1325, which seeks to protect women, prevent violence and guarantee increased involvement of women in peace and security processes. Engaging women in dialogue will help address the root causes of conflict, thus contributing to sustainable peace and development.

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# Promoting Women's Rights: Creating Conditions for Post-Conflict Peace?

Gudlaug Olafsdottir

Since the ratification of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, ever more emphasis has been put on women's empowerment in the wake of armed conflict, sometimes framed as a "window of opportunity" for women to enhance their formal standing amidst institutional reform.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, many post-conflict countries have promulgated legislation and policies in support of female participation in various spheres.<sup>2</sup> These trends notwithstanding, such measures do not necessarily always appear to lead to the intended or anticipated outcome. Even where women gain legal rights in post-conflict countries, it appears insufficient to prevent a backlash against women in the aftermath of war.<sup>3</sup> I thus propose that in the coming decade international organizations consider what can be learned from the past regarding the conditions that are most conducive to promoting women's rights in the aftermath of conflict and how these conditions influence the prospects for peace.

Despite strong promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality by policymakers and peacebuilding practitioners, little is yet known regarding when active encouragement of change in gender structures fosters the development of gender equality or when it leads to unanticipated outcomes in the aftermath of conflict.<sup>4</sup> Gendered outcomes of conflict themselves often put a strain on gender relations, resulting in a tension between any gains toward female emancipation that were made during the conflict and the post-conflict quest in many societies to reinstitute more traditional structures.<sup>5</sup> These post-conflict tensions must be taken into account when proposing policies and programs pushing for women's empowerment; knowing the conditions that help in overcoming such tensions is essential to the pursuit of sustainable peace.

While gender mainstreaming policies are widespread and programs to aid women are many, there is a need to focus on the most efficient strategies for attaining change and those that cause the least amount of harm. I propose that international actors do two things: Focus on assisting local civil society organizations in lobbying for change in legislation, and implement locally informed, inclusive programs fostering gender equality. By assisting local organizations in promoting women's rights while simultaneously fostering normative change among men as well as women, women's rights as well as sustainable peace can be more effectively pursued in years to come.

Gender equality and its impacts for promoting peace can be actively brought about (or entrenched) by legislation during post-conflict reconstruction. Building on lessons from past decades, I argue that adoption and enforcement of women's rights is conducive to conflict risk mitigation if these rights are actively espoused by domestic civil society and promoted among men as well as women. Conversely, if prescriptively introduced from abroad or introduced without support from local nongovernmental actors and promoted only among women, advocacy for increased rights for women is more likely to yield criticism of international intervention, globalization and the affront to traditional values.<sup>6</sup> Such efforts risk further entrenching wartime gender relations that pose risks to the security of women and to society at large.

## *Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Conflict Risk Mitigation*

Shifting norms toward lessened belligerence due to changing gender roles is one component of Pinker's argument that the global decline of war is a result of shifts in societal structures in which norms and institutions constraining the use of violence are developed.<sup>7</sup>

While gender norms play out in different ways across the world, traditional gender roles take on a similar aspect globally, with males depicted as protective warriors who are supported by yielding female figures. Femininity is generally associated with nurturing tenderness; men are ascribed more competitive, assertive traits. Such associations lead societies to associate dominance, leadership and sometimes violence with masculinity, particularly in relation to war.<sup>8</sup> In communities where these gender constructions are strong, there is an implicit acceptance of dominance of one sex over the other and acceptance of violent assertiveness as an expression of masculinity.<sup>9</sup> These norms tend to entail an acceptance for other norms that promote structural as well as direct violence.<sup>10</sup>

By denouncing violence as an acceptable expression of masculinity and condemning dominance of one group over another, the deconstruction of the above described socially constructed gender roles should be conducive to peace. Gender equality is an expression of a norm change that, in aggregate, should keep violence from spreading from the individual to the national level. If the population condemns violence, nonstate armed groups are less likely to garner support or recruit fighters. If gender-equal norms can be bolstered, the risk of war should decrease as women's emancipation increases. However, if promotion of women's rights is met with skepticism and discontent, it may produce a backlash against women and entrench wartime gender roles.

Women's security is central to the security of the state.<sup>11</sup> It is largely defined by laws. Not only do laws establish frameworks for crimes and punishment, they stipulate what is acceptable or desirable in a society. Societies that institute and retain laws that enshrine the dominance of men over women officially allow and accept such structures.<sup>12</sup> Regulations ensuring that women and men are equal, stipulating that neither has the right to exert dominance over the other in any sphere, and those that criminalize harmful acts that mainly afflict one sex should facilitate gender equality. Given the prevalence of patriarchal structures, legislation aimed toward achieving gender equality generally translates into increased rights for women.

If such legislation is adopted and enforced, it should influence gender norms. First, laws have symbolic value, in that they set a normative structure to guide conduct within state institutions as well as in the broader society.<sup>13</sup> Further, by establishing women's rights, proponents of gender equality gain a legitimate framework to call upon in support of the pursuit of gender-equal practices as well as to hold officials to account should they neglect to implement or adhere to such rights.<sup>14</sup> Second, as policies that help women enter political, economic, educational and social arenas are put into place and where public institutions implement and enforce them, gender-equal practices should lead to a gradual change in the gender roles in society. By implementing women's rights, women should gain political agency, economic independence and control over their own reproductive rights and health. Their gains in these areas are likely to further promote gender-equal practices, enforce gender-equal norms, and in turn, foster a condemnation of violence.<sup>15</sup>

## *The Role of Civil Society*

While the prevalence of laws protecting women and aiming to enhance their status may be an indicator of extant norms in a country, it is not a certainty. At times, external actors or in-country elites push for laws without the acquiescence of the broader society.<sup>16</sup> In many places where women's rights have been legally established, social structures question their legitimacy and prevent their realization.<sup>17</sup> When such hindrances are removed, rights are likely to be more accepted as well as enacted.

If post-conflict reconstruction is built entirely from the top down, it may not resonate in society at large. It may lead to resentment from the local population, feelings of disconnection to the decisions made, or opposition to reforms that appear to be in tension with their everyday lives.<sup>18</sup> If changes are driven by grassroots demands, however, they are more likely to gain legitimacy and acceptance.<sup>19</sup> Women's rights must be buttressed by the local civil society organizations in order to influence post-conflict peace. If mobilized groups within civil society demand adoption of women's rights, the public is more likely to view these reforms as legitimate.

Civil society support can have multiple effects on the relationship between women's rights and conflict. Beyond pushing for the initial guarantee of rights, civil society organizations can monitor implementation and ensure

it is appropriate to the local setting.<sup>20</sup> Such groups are best placed to assist in building local knowledge, raising awareness in the community and mobilizing resources so that citizens can exercise and demand their own rights.<sup>21</sup> They may also be an important bridge between the international community and the local population, providing local networks and contextual knowledge.<sup>22</sup> If local civil society groups that push for women's rights are strong and unrestricted, there is more likely to be a strong foundation for the promulgation and enactment of women's rights and a greater likelihood of internal legitimacy.

Importantly, such groups ought not focus only on women. While building women's knowledge of their rights is central, barriers to enacting such rights must be broken down. Otherwise, such efforts may be futile and even harmful. Particularly after armed conflict, it is essential to focus programs on women and men. In order to promote sustainable peace as well as mitigate a backlash toward women who assert their rights and nontraditional roles, it is essential to address "militarized masculinity."<sup>23</sup> If men perceive they are disadvantaged relative to women in aid to better their situation, they are more likely to oppose initiatives aimed toward gender equality. This opposition risks cementing the barriers to women's empowerment, as well as causing harm toward women who assert their rights.

In sum, prevalent, strong local civil society groups that promote women's rights and include programs engaging men as well as women will enhance the legitimacy and implementation of women's rights. The effect on gender-equal norms would be positive, given lower levels of local resistance and greater institutionalization. Together, changes in gender norms and increased acceptance of women's rights should lower the risk of armed conflict, as norms condemning dominance and violence become more widespread and the risk of post-conflict backlash against women is reduced.

## Conclusion

The promotion of women's rights, beyond its inherent importance, can be successfully implemented and can contribute to peacebuilding in post-conflict settings if such efforts are supported by domestic civil society in an inclusive manner. Where support from civil society is strong, the legitimacy of women's rights promotion is greater, gender-equal norms are more likely to develop, and political violence is more likely to be condemned. These conditions in turn are more likely to contribute to sustained peace. Yet this outcome is contingent on civil society initiatives engaging men as well as women. Hence, international organizations promoting legislation to advance women's rights at the national level must ensure that their initiatives are rooted in local civil society, that work on the ground is done in close collaboration with these local actors, and that initiatives also raise men's awareness of the importance of women's rights and mitigating militarized masculinities.

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# Escaping the Closet: Women, Peace and Security Was Already Queer

Andrea Tuemmler

Audre Lorde, a pioneer in calling attention to the intersection of antiracist, queer and feminist advocacy, argued that “the failure ... to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower.”<sup>1</sup> The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, advanced in the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, defines the problem of women’s exclusion from security discourse and challenges it legally. UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions elevated women’s voices in peace and security and recognized gender as integral, not incidental, in responding effectively to conflict. Talking about *women as women* in the Security Council was a bold political act. Because of the political progress this agenda enabled, however, the rhetorical focus on women now circumscribes an agenda that is otherwise well placed to question gendered power in peace and security.

In the next decade, the WPS agenda must shift to focus on gender. This idea is not new, and many civil society organizations (CSOs) and academics have been de facto working as if WPS were the gender, peace, and security agenda.<sup>2</sup> An effective way to push gender out of the discursive, theoretical sphere and into official policy is to queer the WPS agenda. Including queer people and discourses would make the agenda more legitimate in its claims to respond to the needs of all women. It also lays a groundwork for nuanced policy responses that unravel gendered power binaries that underpin women’s marginalization from security spaces and their vulnerabilities to gendered violence. This essay reviews work being done to queer the WPS agenda, gives policy recommendations for how to better institutionalize this work, and argues that this work can strengthen the agenda as it moves toward 2030.

I take “queer” to be the most flexible, least prescriptive term for nonnormative sexual orientations and gender identities. I use it to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) communities as well as sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights discourse, without being limited by labels that do not always reflect the self-identification and experiences of queer people. For example, these labels can exclude indigenous two-spirit and third-gender identities, and they often collapse the distinct but interrelated issues of gender and sexuality. Queer language also has the benefit of disentangling sexed bodies with masculine and feminine constructs, allowing us to question gendered constructs like “militarized masculinity” without making generalizations about “all men” and “no women.”

## Current Efforts

The global pushback against using “gender ideology”—that it merely represents a progressive, politically correct culture<sup>3</sup>—undermines genuine conversations about gender. Still, real progress has been made even with advocates, as many avoid third-rail words like “gender.” For example, the most recent WPS resolution, SCR 2467 (2019) recognized that sexual and gender-based violence affects not only women and that men and boys must also have access to care.<sup>4</sup> It also calls for “gender analysis,” a term that often is interpreted to mean looking only at women but which has enough flexibility so that CSOs can interpret it more broadly.<sup>5</sup>

Academia and CSOs, however, have made more progress. Academics such as Jamie Hagan are increasingly writing about LGBTI people within the WPS agenda,<sup>6</sup> and CSOs like International Alert are also including LGBTI people in their WPS programming.<sup>7</sup> Outright International, an explicitly LGBTI organization, is part



of the NGO Working Group.<sup>8</sup> Individual countries, too, have made progress in inclusion of queer people: Colombia's 2016 Peace Accord included LGBTI advocacy organizations in its Subcommission on Gender, a consultation that led to explicit recognition of the unique impact of the decades-long conflict on LGBTI populations in the country.<sup>9</sup> Canada, Argentina and Japan also have provisions recognizing the unique needs of LGBTI communities in their most recent National Action Plans for WPS implementation.<sup>10</sup>

Queer people have been integral to the WPS agenda from the beginning, so the challenge of mainstreaming their voices and needs is not one of invention but rather of recognition. I lay out recommendations that can be implemented at the United Nations, member states, and CSOs, and all of these policy recommendations rest on the core principle of recognition as key to normative and legal change.

## ***Policy Recommendations***

### ***1. At the United Nations Security Council: Talk To, and About, Queer People.***

Ideally, subsequent WPS resolutions should include explicit language recognizing LGBTI populations and their unique vulnerabilities in conflict. Direct language helps affirm global norm development. It informs resource allocation within peacekeeping missions for queer peacekeepers and queer members of the host countries. Grants can be directed to CSOs already working with LGBTI populations, and incentives can be created for CSOs to develop programs that align with the funding priorities of UN country teams as part of humanitarian responses. A natural entry point for this language is in provisions that already recognize the need for psychosocial and medical resources for male survivors of sexual violence. Gender-neutral language would not infringe on discursive space held for women only, but it would broaden the space to include nonbinary and third genders. Recognizing that key voices on the Security Council have domestic agendas that are antagonistic toward recognition of LGBTI people, there are other more subtle ways of achieving similar ends.<sup>11</sup> For example, the Security Council should invite more queer people to provide civil society briefings, both as queer people and as experts on policy areas where their queerness is incidental. Creating rhetorical and physical space for queer people in the halls of power is necessary to shift the norms toward greater inclusion, even if political barriers prevent the codification of LGBTI rights into council resolutions.

### ***2. Within Member-State Governments: Talk To, and About, Queer People.***

Individual member states are better positioned to incorporate queer people into their domestic implementation of the WPS agenda. National action plans (NAPs) such as Japan's contain provisions identifying LGBTI populations specifically.<sup>12</sup> State-level WPS policy can make important inroads in questioning military cultures that discriminate against LGBTI members of security and police forces as well as perpetuate other harmful impacts of militarized masculinities for cis and straight men and women in these forces. Gender nuance also leads to better domestic policy outcomes, such as security forces that are better attuned to queer constituencies and the gender dynamics of the populations they serve. In addition to including LGBTI language in NAPs and in the operating procedures of police and military forces, attention to LGBTI populations can also push against the siloed nature of gender-sensitive responses, moving the WPS agenda away from being seen as only the purview of women's agencies. WPS can be mainstreamed into security institutions.

### ***3. Among CSOs: Talk To, and About, Local Queer People.***

Given the political constraints facing the UN Security Council and domestic governments, CSOs have the most latitude for pushing for a queerer WPS agenda as policy implementers and norm entrepreneurs. Not only do CSOs wield power to implement queer-sensitive policy as first responders and aid providers in humanitarian situations, they also can avoid some of the problems inherent in top-down approaches to queering WPS. For example, governments such as the United States have been criticized for "pink-washing," that is, using pro-LGBTI rights language and funding to recreate a neocolonial power hierarchy of "good" versus "bad" states that justifies intervention to "protect" queer people.<sup>13</sup> LGBTI identities, especially when used as gatekeeping identities for legal protections in Western countries, have also been criticized for perpetuating neocolonial power and leveraging queer people for political aims.<sup>14</sup> Locally led CSO work that is tailored to specific contexts and contextually salient identities is more legitimate and more effective at addressing the needs of actual queer people.<sup>15</sup> Bottom-up approaches, especially when supported by and informing large international institutions, will be most effective at addressing the needs of queer people, challenging gender stereotypes in conflict, and not reentrenching global power hierarchies.



Including queer people in the WPS agenda will have tangible benefits for queer people. However, their inclusion is critical for the success of the WPS agenda as a whole. The WPS agenda is only legitimate if it responds to the needs of all women. Policy blindness to racial, ethnic and socioeconomic difference means that policies will help only those women who face the fewest barriers; sexual orientation and gender identity must be included. These issues are not exclusively queer, but attention to queer populations is an entry point for a conversation about women's multifaceted needs. An agenda that can foster those discussions will be stronger and more legitimate.

The WPS agenda questions patriarchal assumptions that have justified women's marginalization from decision-making roles and security spaces. These gendered power dynamics also underpin homophobia and transphobia. The WPS agenda has been criticized for its "add women and stir" approach<sup>16</sup>; merely increasing the number of women is insufficient to dismantle the structures that excluded them in the first place. A more radical analysis of gendered power requires questioning, for example, why security spaces are "masculine," if women must act "masculine" to gain access to political power, and why men are socially punished for acting "feminine." These questions cannot be answered fully without taking seriously some degree of epistemic queerness to power. Further, queer people have extensive experience navigating this liminal space, and their voices add important depth to good-faith efforts to deconstruct gendered power for everyone.

Today, we are more accepting of queer people than when UNSCR 1325 was written. Queer feminists have always been at the vanguard of women's advocacy, and it is time that their voices be mainstreamed in the WPS discourse. Audre Lorde verbalized the urgency of a deep commitment to intersectionality: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."<sup>17</sup> Her words should guide a recognition of the latent queerness in the WPS agenda as it moves into the next decade.

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