



NEW  
DIRECTIONS  
IN WOMEN,  
PEACE AND  
SECURITY

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# **Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Cartography**

*Soumita Basu, Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd*

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, associated with the United Nations Security Council resolutions of a similar name, is widely recognized as the most significant and wide-reaching global framework for advancing gender equality in military affairs, conflict resolution and security governance. The first of these resolutions, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, bound the international community to ensure, among other provisions, greater participation of women in decision making in national, regional and international institutions; their further involvement in peacekeeping, field operations, mission consultation and peace negotiations; increased funds and other support to the gender work of UN entities; enhanced state commitments to the human rights of women and girls and the protection of those rights under international law; the introduction of special measures against sexual violence in armed conflict; and due consideration to the experiences and needs of women and girls in humanitarian, refugee, disarmament and post-conflict settings. As such, it was a ground-breaking commitment by the Security Council, the intergovernmental body charged with maintenance of international peace and security and widely regarded as a bastion of masculinized power and privilege (see Cohn, 2008), to acknowledge the significance of gender dynamics in active conflict situations and in peace and security governance. Nine subsequent resolutions, focused on varying themes and mechanisms, have been added to the agenda since then (the resolutions are summarized on p. xx of this volume).

In the 20 years since the passage of the foundational resolution, academics, advocates and independent analysts have produced a

significant volume of scholarship on the WPS agenda. This literature has sought to justify the aims of the agenda through research on various aspects of women's vulnerability and women's agency; innovated metrics of progress on the agenda's multiple goals; assessed the nature of its implementation in diverse parts of the world; proposed modifications to policy; and occasionally sounded a dissonant note in critiquing the international politics of WPS. More recently, attention has been drawn to new themes, such as the intersections between countering violent extremism and WPS, the invisibility of race and sexuality in WPS discourse and practice, and the engagement of men within and alongside WPS. This literature has also considered the proliferation of actors who are taking on, extending and transforming WPS principles; the deepening and broadening of WPS can be detected in new attitudes towards the agenda in foreign policy platforms and in those organizations that have engaged with WPS principles beyond the umbrella of the United Nations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the African Union (AU).

The contributors to this edited volume reflect diversity in thinking and methodological plurality, both of which are characteristic of contemporary WPS scholarship. This introductory chapter sets out a roadmap for readers, drawing attention to the landmarks that signify the field of WPS research and practice, and offering critical orientation towards the field. The map unfolds in three sections. The first section explores the emergence of 'WPS' as a discrete object of analysis, showing how WPS has gone from peace activism at the margins of world politics to a more significant landmark in the peace and security environment than perhaps anyone could have envisaged. Part II draws attention to the new themes and new actors that have gained visibility in recent years. Further, it highlights the 'encounters' between the various aspects of WPS, as well as the emerging 'horizons' that have become perceptible in the contemporary field of study, thereby also introducing contributions specific to the two parts of this volume. The third and concluding section outlines some new contestations, tensions and constellations of power, re-situating the new politics of WPS – the focus of this volume – in relation to geographical, temporal and institutional scales.

## **Map and territory**

Twenty years after its inception, the reach of 'Women, Peace and Security' is extensive, contested and uncertain. Ten Security Council resolutions, over a hundred National Action Plans (including revised

iterations), and dozens of regional organizational policies now constitute a vast normative infrastructure of significant ambition but questionable impact. This textual layer of WPS is only the most legible, and arguably the least informative, map of practice available. Beyond it lies a universe of struggles, documented and undocumented, to incubate and sustain feminist peace, waged by social movements, NGOs, progressive political blocs, historians, artists, and citizens, in locations from parliaments to households, all of which could reasonably be seen as motivated by the same desires that instigated the agenda at the turn of the 21st century. Concurrently, feminist scholarship on peace and security has traced, and in important respects pre-empted, developments in WPS policy and practice.

From the end of the First World War onwards, an interdisciplinary body of literature – spanning the social sciences, humanities and beyond – has made the case for recognizing women as subjects in the analyses of armed conflicts and peacebuilding. Within the discipline of International Relations, feminist and critical scholars have presented richly detailed empirical research and theoretical innovation on this, as well as peace and security more broadly; these have been valuable resources for WPS scholars and practitioners, including for the authors and editors of this volume. Furthermore, there was an active participation of scholar-practitioners such as Betty Reardon and Carol Cohn in the ‘complex network’ of actors advocating for UNSCR 1325 (Cockburn, 2007, pp 145–146), a tradition that has continued as part of WPS policy evolution.

As WPS gained traction as an agenda, a generation of scholars and activists worked to advance, refine and challenge its constitutive parts. Some operated as advocates, and later found the agenda wanting in basic respects. Others took the agenda as one case study in gender-mainstreaming and sought to uncover the sources of its diffusion. Still others have seen in WPS another chapter in the co-optation of radical politics to shore up the legitimacy of the usual suspects. To trace the development of the field, we conducted a review of 240 articles and book chapters focused on WPS, yielding several insights of note.<sup>1</sup>

A first finding relates to the *timing* of scholarly interest. Only one WPS-related paper was published each year from 2003 to 2006, rising to two or three in the lead-up to the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Thereafter, the pace accelerates. Thirty pieces were published in 2011, dipping to between 20 and 25 a year until 2015, and then rising again to totals in the mid-30s and mid-40s each year following the 15th anniversary. The upward tick in interest is consistent with academic production closely tracking policy landmarks, especially in

convening special issues and edited volumes timed to coincide with, or reflect on, anniversaries (see, for example, Olonisakin et al, 2011; special issues in *International Peacekeeping*, 2010; *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2011; *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2014; *International Affairs*, 2016; and *International Political Science Review*, 2016). The pattern is starkly at odds with the prevailing image of the academy as detached from public life. Instead, the pace of knowledge production has to a significant extent been set by opportunities to reflect on, and shape, real world politics.<sup>2</sup>

Judging by the documentary trail, it has only just become possible to speak of a WPS research *community* as such. Half of all WPS publications date from the latest three-year period examined (2016–2018), with the most influential material of the first decade generated by a small number of academics. The impression is somewhat misleading, as some ‘canonical’ early work on WPS does not register in bibliographic searches due to the way in which the agenda was originally formulated and understood. For example, Dianne Otto’s hugely influential insights into feminist organizing – ‘power and danger’, ‘the exile of inclusion’, ‘the Security Council’s alliance of gender legitimacy’ – were not framed with ‘WPS’ as the singular focus and so tend to fall outside of bibliographic records of the core archive (see Otto, 2009; 2010a; 2010b).<sup>3</sup>

The ambiguity in delimitations of the field in the decade following the passage of UNSCR 1325 points to a second insight: that the *coherence* of WPS as a research object is more recent than may be supposed. The *agenda* as such only comes into being in the late 2000s with the second and subsequent Security Council resolutions. But even before that point, criticism of UNSCR 1325 and its effects was frequently expressed not in terms of an internal logic specific to a policy or organizational form but as one site in a variegated and dynamic field of feminist activism. The contemporary hierarchical or sequential linkage of elements – the acronym ‘WPS’, the Security Council, the text of the resolutions, their key ‘pillars’, the mechanics of implementation, and national and regional variations on a theme – simply did not exist in the early years of UNSCR 1325. Efforts at the United Nations were theorized as one tactic in a broad and deep effort at transnational feminist organizing and mobilization, most obviously building on the World Conferences on Women, but extending far beyond UN-sponsored fora. The attempt to transform practices of ‘international security’ was conscious, and animated by the conviction that the power of the Security Council *could* be leveraged for feminist ends, but even here the vision was encompassing: to ‘[build] a social movement reaching out to those working on issues of human rights,

international law, the environment, globalization and terrorism-related issues', in the words of two key advocates (Felicity Hill and Maha Muna in Cohn et al, 2004, p 132).

The closing of feminist space *through* the WPS agenda – and especially the fixation on wartime rape – has been much commented on (see, for example, Aroussi, 2011). To some extent, academics contributed to the narrowing of the agenda, underscoring a tension over the implementation of WPS that continues in the present (and which we examine in more detail later). Though the shift to a discrete WPS agenda is recent, we are able to make out other patterns in scholarly interest over time. A number of early interventions foregrounded peace politics, women's human rights, or otherwise recognized an implicit tension between feminist aims and Security Council practices (Kandiyoti, 2004; El-Bushra, 2007; Binder et al, 2008; Hudson, 2009; Tryggstad, 2010). We interpret this wariness against the backdrop of feminist peace scholarship, in which several early scholars of WPS were steeped. Emerging from the late 1980s' renaissance of feminist IR, figures like Carol Cohn, Cynthia Enloe and Cynthia Cockburn understood 'international peace and security' as a profoundly masculinist endeavour, and Resolution 1325 as a partial, pragmatic and limited impingement upon that domain.

As attention to the agenda grew, so scholarship concentrated on a select number of key issues and sites in which WPS was understood to happen. Of the ten most-cited pieces on WPS in our survey, it is not surprising that most focus primarily on the politics of the United Nations Security Council (Shepherd, 2008; Tryggstad, 2009; Bell and O'Rourke, 2010; Puechguirbal, 2010; Willett, 2010; Gibbings, 2011; Pratt and Richter-Devroe, 2011; Shepherd, 2011) with only two emphasizing the circulation of UNSCR 1325 beyond the UN (El-Bushra, 2007; McLeod, 2011). Significant fractions of the literature address issues of wartime sexual violence (for example, Simic, 2010; Aroussi, 2017; Reilly, 2018); women's inclusion in peacekeeping (for example, Henry, 2012; Karim, 2017; Deiana and McDonagh, 2018) or WPS as grounds for humanitarian intervention (for example, Dharmapuri, 2013; Davies et al, 2015), with contestations within the UN system fundamental in each instance. Following the growth in national strategies, scholars put questions of implementation – and suggestions for improvements – to the fore (for example, Diop, 2011; Lee-Koo, 2014; True, 2016; Swaine, 2017). The result was a panorama of case studies and detailed policy analysis as research programmes shifted away from the UN system towards patterns of diffusion, localization and failure.



The recognition of WPS as a policy field enabled doctoral students to take it as their focus, consolidating the ‘generational’ shift in a fairly direct sense: whereas early scholarship apprehended WPS through the prism of prior feminist struggles, more recent projects have undertaken closer readings in which the existence of a continuous, if evolving, agenda is taken as given. This work is developing as we write, and in directions that are not yet settled (as several of the contributors to this volume make clear). Thus a third insight from our survey – on which we expand later – is that WPS scholarship has become plural in parallel with the expansion and growing complexity of the agenda.

### **Charting the (ongoing) journey**

From the very outset, the fanfare around the WPS agenda was tempered by the pragmatism of its advocates. Jennifer Klot, the Senior Governance Advisor at UNIFEM at the time, noted that the resolution’s provisions are ‘as specific and narrow as is the Security Council’s mandate’ (Klot, 2002, p 18). There have been many ebbs and flows in the formal WPS agenda since then. These have been widely discussed, both in scholarly and policy literatures, and it is apparent that this evolution does not allow for easy judgment. For instance, the disproportionate focus on conflict-related sexual violence, which has drawn much criticism, is also the issue area that has seen the most concrete developments: sanctions as a response to sexual violence were first mentioned in UNSCR 1820; the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict was established following the passage of UNSCR 1888, as was the requirement for yearly reports to the Security Council on sexual violence in conflict; sexual violence against men and boys was explicitly recognized in UNSCR 2106; and monitoring on sexual violence crimes was expanded in UNSCR 2467. And yet, backtracking on issues like sexual and reproductive rights is already in evidence with the 9th and 10th resolutions (the most recent at the time of writing) (Allen and Shepherd, 2019; Hossain et al, 2019; Ní Aoláin, 2019). More broadly, in the last 20 years, the agenda has expanded from its initial three ‘P’s – participation, protection and prevention – vis-à-vis armed conflicts, to the addition of the pillars of relief and recovery and normative framework; more recently, we see the inclusion of transitional justice and countering violent extremism (see Coomaraswamy et al, 2015). While such expansion has created new constituencies, the absence of strong implementation and accountability mechanisms to undergird this growth has compounded the precarity of the contemporary global WPS agenda.

The global framework of policy mechanisms and transnational advocacy efforts has provided the political rationale for the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) by governments for the implementation of WPS resolutions. Some of these NAPs have taken the agenda forward by identifying issue areas that are specific to their context. Carrie Reiling points to the use of development as a key concern in the NAPs of some African countries (Reiling, 2017 cited in True, 2019, p 141). The NAP adopted by the government of Nepal, with considerable inputs from local civil society actors and international agencies, includes provisions for widows, whose needs are otherwise not addressed in the WPS resolutions (Owen, 2011, p 617). The most enterprising use of the WPS resolutions, however, has been on the part of civil society organizations (CSOs), who have employed it to demand action from their governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the UN. Early on, women peace activists in Liberia brandished copies of the UNSCR 1325 during the peace negotiations to claim their places at the peace table. In certain cases, the distinction between the state's and the civil society's visions of the WPS agenda has been very apparent; Laura McLeod's research in Serbia, for example, highlights this tension (McLeod, 2011). In yet another case, that of India, both the state and civil society have had limited engagement with the formal WPS agenda, in large part due to reservations regarding the Security Council, the institutional home of the WPS resolutions (Basu, 2016).

Certainly, the multiple iterations of the WPS agenda are not independent either of the relevant actors that give meaning to it and are responsible for its implementation, nor the material and discursive contexts within which it is understood and operationalized. The three key sets of actors that have been associated with the agenda are intergovernmental organizations, especially the UN and its agencies; national governments; and local and transnational civil society actors. Over the years, there have been important developments that mark this engagement. The UN has seen a growing institutionalization of the WPS agenda, in the form of subsequent WPS resolutions, policy frameworks for implementation, new offices and usually more than one annual debate at the Security Council. Each of these have required intense efforts on the part of advocates, even as it has been difficult to ensure that the policy mechanisms are effectively implemented. Regional entities such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Wright, 2016) and the African Union (Hendricks, 2017), which do not have a tradition of addressing the gender dimension in military affairs, have also taken the WPS agenda on board. In addition to the challenges relating to implementation, analysts have drawn attention to the negative

ramifications of the increasing institutionalization of the WPS agenda. These include, among others, the assimilation of the more ‘radical’ aspects of gender politics into the ‘business-as-usual’ organizational culture at these organizations; and, related to this, the instrumentalization of women’s inclusion in the arena of international peace and security, wherein the argument for increasing their participation is made on the basis of operational effectiveness and not gender equality.

The threat of co-option lends itself more easily to growing involvement of states with the WPS agenda. As of November 2019, 82 UN member states have adopted NAPs for the implementation of the WPS resolutions, with some states having moved on to the third or fourth iteration of their NAP.<sup>4</sup> While the significance of states in realizing the WPS agenda cannot be overstated, the nature of their engagement so far lends credence to feminist apprehensions regarding the state as an agent for positive transformations in gender politics. For instance, NAPs of countries in the global North tend to be ‘outward-oriented’, focusing on their mandate as donors or troop contributors, and do not reflect on WPS issues relating to their respective domestic context (see also Haastrup and Hagen, this volume). This speaks also to the observation that NAPs of countries in the global South may not have organic roots, and are usually developed with support from donor agencies and intergovernmental organizations; gender would not be a policy priority if not for the funding received, and ‘expertise’ imposed, from the international sphere. As such, both sets of NAPs do not only appear to ‘gender-wash’ states’ security policies, but WPS becomes yet another pretext to perpetuate the dominance of the global North over the global South. A recent development, the emergence of ‘feminist foreign policy’, has added further complexity to governmental engagement with the WPS agenda, especially in relation to countries of the global North. Associated most famously with Sweden, but invoked in relation to other countries, including the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia, these have been discussed in relation to UNSCR 1325, in terms of both their concurrent development as well as such foreign policies providing a more favourable context within which to advance the WPS agenda (see Aggestam et al, 2018). Promising as this may seem, the extent to which a feminist foreign policy may reconfigure the agenda (or indeed, vice versa) is yet to be seen.

The third set of actors that have been integral to the evolution of WPS belong to civil society. The significance of transnational non-governmental organizations in the passage of UNSCR 1325 is widely recognized and much celebrated. As highlighted in the previous section, the origins of the resolution lie in feminist peace activism

that precede the formal WPS agenda by several decades. Civil society groups have been involved in the drafting, monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of the resolutions. Conversely, the resolutions recognize and seek to support the role that women's organizations and civil society, more broadly, play in facilitating the implementation of provisions laid down in the WPS resolutions. This institutionalization, however, has come at a cost. In order to make sense to the decision makers, groups that seek to engage are bound by the formal policy language and mechanisms that inevitably restrict the scope of the agenda. There are tensions between those who speak this language, and others who remain distant (by choice or otherwise) from the corridors of power. Funding imperatives are also a concern. As in the case of other issue areas, individuals and organizations that are well-networked and professionalized are better positioned to access resources set aside by donors for civil society engagement compared to those who may have a deeper understanding of the specific contexts. Further, it is notable that in many parts of the world, local organizations whose work predates the formal agenda remain unaware of the mechanisms and their potential use in mobilizing resources and policy responses. As such, on the one hand, it should be acknowledged that the status gained by civil society is not only long overdue but needs further recognition and support. On the other hand, it is important for WPS advocates to remain vigilant of the perils of hyper-professionalization of civil society participation.

By necessity, an outline of the kind we present here – on the themes and actors that animate the contemporary WPS agenda – can only be painted in broad strokes. The complexities to which we draw attention in this introductory discussion are explored in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. These balance analytical imperatives common to WPS and other areas of feminist research (including security studies, peace studies, foreign policy analysis, diplomacy, and law and justice) alongside specially commissioned personal narratives and accounts from experts, policymakers and advocates working in the space of WPS policy and practice. Indeed, many of the contributors locate themselves at the intersections of scholarship and practice, and have engaged in feminist work in the peace and security arena from before the emergence of the formal WPS agenda.

Part I of the volume, entitled 'Encounters', assesses efforts to realize the WPS agenda in specific contexts, geographical and institutional, and political fallouts of the same. These include four chapters presented as conversations between academics, practitioners and indeed those whose work spans both worlds. In the opening conversation, Lucy

Hall interviews Rita Martin Lopidia about her organization's efforts to engender peace processes in South Sudan, particularly in relation to the WPS agenda and the country's NAP. Lopidia highlights the many challenges that impede the effective implementation of the resolutions. Continuing with the theme of local implications, Nicole George and Rita Manchanda in turn examine the limitations of the WPS agenda in securing peace and gender equality, in relation to the Pacific Islands and South Asia respectively. While George brings forth the negative ramifications of imposing the 'economic peace' paradigm on a region that has traditionally followed a different economic logic, Manchanda focuses on issues of militarization, transitional justice and women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts. It is evident from their analysis that universal frames of the WPS agenda are not equipped to speak to the lived experiences of women and men in these regions.

Next, Minna Lyytikäinen and Marjaana Jauhola reflect on their experience as civil society participants in the consultations organized by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the development of the country's third WPS NAP. They employ auto-ethnography to critique the growing bureaucratization of such deliberations and bring to light the ways in which dissent was 'managed' during the series of consultations, as well as the resistance mounted by civil society actors. In the following chapter, Elizabeth Pearson analyses the policy imperative of 'countering violent extremism' that has received considerable attention in recent years. She examines a specific case, that of the British counter-radicalization strategy *Prevent* and women participants' navigation of the same in different regions of the country. Drawing on substantive empirical research, Pearson contends that it is limiting to see women as mere instruments in CVE community initiatives, and points to the ways in which they have come to exercise their agency and 'own' such policies.

Turning the focus to the international realm, Louise Chappell interviews Patricia Viseur Sellers, who (at the time of writing) is the Special Adviser on Gender to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. They discuss the potential of international criminal law and international humanitarian law to address sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts, particularly in relation to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Further, they examine the scope of the WPS resolutions in strengthening such legal mechanisms and comment on possible futures of the agenda. Finally, this section is rounded out by a conversation between Louise Allen and Sam Cook, who have worked with the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and the PeaceWomen

project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) respectively. Drawing on their extensive advocacy experience at the UN Headquarters in New York, they consider the fraught relations that mark civil society's engagement with intergovernmental machineries, and the challenges they encountered in their efforts to hold 'feminist space' at the UN.

*Part II*, entitled 'Horizons', focuses primarily on issues that have traditionally either been separate from, or overlooked, in the formal WPS agenda. Toni Haastrup and Jamie Hagen open the section with a decolonial analysis of the NAPs of select countries of the global North in order to highlight the racialized hierarchies that characterize the North-South dynamics in WPS politics. Weapons control is another particularly important topic, as disarmament has been central to feminist advocacy in the peace and security arena since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the WPS resolutions do not have provisions in this regard and the agenda itself has been critiqued for its militarized orientation, Anna Stavrianakis examines some recent policy successes, especially the substantive reference to gender-based violence in the UN Arms Trade Treaty. Looking into the future, she calls for the need to ensure that such developments would be inadequate unless these are inclusive of anti-racist and anti-imperialist insights. Marta Bautista Forcada and Cristina Hernández Lázaro draw attention to yet another aspect of contemporary armed conflicts in the form of the privatization of military and security services in the last few decades. The authors take note both of the threats posed by private military and security companies (PMSCs) as well as the inadequacy of existing legal mechanisms to regulate their work. They advocate for the inclusion of PMSCs as a new challenge to be considered within the WPS agenda.

In the next chapter, Gema Fernández Rodríguez de Liévana and Christine Chinkin suggest that human trafficking as an issue area has mostly been neglected within the WPS agenda and, further, that the Security Council's approach to WPS and trafficking has done a disservice to realizing the potential of the women's human rights' regime in addressing this issue. They argue for more effectively integrating a human rights-based approach into the WPS agenda. Another dimension of forced movements of people, that of climate change-induced migration, is discussed in relation to the WPS agenda by Briana Mawby and Anna Applebaum. They highlight the gendered aspects of climate change-induced migration, including as a growing threat to women's security, and provide some introductory reflections on the need to employ the WPS agenda in a context wherein its scope has remained relatively unexplored. The concluding chapter is a conversation

between Joy Onyesoh, Madeleine Rees and Catia C. Confortini, all associated with WILPF in different capacities. They examine the co-option of the WPS agenda by governments and the UN, and reflect on the ways in which feminist advocates have sought to, and can, confront such challenges. WILPF has been at the forefront of international advocacy for incorporating feminist visions of peace into international policy frameworks, since its inception in 1915; it has also played a significant role in the WPS journey. As such, this conversation brings our efforts to map ‘new directions’ in the WPS agenda full circle.

### **The road ahead**

To conclude our cartography, in this final section we continue to reflect on the last two decades of WPS activity and consider some of the tensions and contestations in the WPS agenda that might animate research and practice over the next two decades. We focus on two sets of tensions that are broadly illustrative of the ways in which the agenda has emerged and developed over time. First, we explore the question of boundaries: the histories of the WPS agenda are histories of territorial struggle, not only over what the WPS agenda *is* (as discussed in the previous sections) but also over what is included as a ‘WPS issue’ and what is not. Where those boundary lines are drawn, and what is therefore included and excluded, has clear political effects. Second, we interrogate the idea of implementation. The tension we identify here is not so much in the barriers to implementation, but in the basis on which it is decided whether implementation is happening effectively, or not. This is a question of measurement and evidence. We examine some of the claims that are made about WPS successes and failures, and critically engage with efforts to capture WPS activity using trackers, indicators and composite indices. We conclude by noting the intractable challenges faced by the WPS agenda, the ‘wicked problems’ (Conklin, 2005) that seem both irreducible and impervious to resolution. It is likely that these challenges will drive the agenda forward for many years to come, and thus we draw our cartography to a close by foreshadowing how these problems – and the institutional infrastructures that have grown up around them – will shape the WPS agenda in the future.

The question of boundaries is not a new issue in WPS scholarship. Although the conventional narrative of the WPS agenda suggests neat division into four ‘pillars’ deriving from UNSCR 1325, this coherence and consolidation was in fact a later development. The first System-Wide Action Plan for implementation of WPS at the UN identifies 12 areas of action (United Nations Security Council, 2005,

p 3), which were narrowed to five thematic areas (the four pillars, plus a normative dimension) in the second System-Wide Action Plan in 2007. The five areas were reported on across four pillars in 2010, as the normative pillar was deemed to be ‘cross-cutting’ and was therefore incorporated into reporting on the other four pillars rather than being reported on separately (United Nations Security Council, 2010). This process of narrowing and focusing on prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery simultaneously *includes* the ‘pillars’ within the boundaries of the WPS agenda, broad as they are.

There is a growing body of work that examines ‘tensions’ in the WPS agenda (see, for example, Hudson, 2013; Lee-Koo, 2014; Kirby, 2015; George and Shepherd, 2016), recognizing that boundary-drawing practices drive the agenda in radically different directions. In previous work, two of us have noted a specific tension relating to the structure and organization of the agenda itself around the four ‘pillars’ identified earlier, and the ‘subsequent narrowing of the agenda around one of these’ – protection (Kirby and Shepherd, 2016, p 379). Institutionally, the creation of United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) and the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), and the absence of offices mandated to engage with women’s conflict prevention work and women’s participation in peace and security, lends credence to the claim that conflict-related sexual violence in conflict is *a* central – if not *the* central – part of the WPS agenda.

It is odd, then, that the agenda around sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN peacekeepers and allied actors has developed separate to WPS. Prompted by a UN Office of Internal Oversight Services investigation in 2002, the ‘zero tolerance’ bulletin issued by the Secretary-General in 2003 quickly became the cornerstone of SEA policy. SEA policy, however, has largely been both conceptually and practically siloed from WPS activity, to the significant detriment of both. As Jasmine-Kim Westendorf argues, ‘prevention and response policies would benefit from being situated within the WPS frame of gender, power and protection issues, while accountability mechanisms would be strengthened by closer integration with CRSV frameworks’ (2017, p 11). The explicit incorporation of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CT/CVE) into WPS represents another example of border skirmishing in the agenda. The process of drafting the resolution outlining the need for gender-sensitive CT/CVE as part of the WPS agenda was highly contentious, with some actors involved in the negotiations arguing forcefully for the protection of the WPS agenda as a peace agenda, concerned that the inclusion of CT/CVE



would securitize and ultimately militarize the agenda. Through her analysis of the institutional effects of such inclusion, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin shows that there are ‘real risks of commodification, agenda hijacking and deepened gendered insecurity in some of the most precarious territories and communities in the world’ incurred through the expansion of the definition of conflict in the WPS agenda to include terrorism and violent extremism (2016, p 277). In the case of both SEA and CT/CVE, whether they are included in, or excluded from, the WPS agenda, this will have material implications for the resources that flow to these areas (both human and financial), and the attention given to these areas within the accounting of WPS implementation and ‘success’.

The idea of implementation forms part of the ‘common sense’ of WPS. It is assumed that the WPS resolutions – and plans, strategies, guidelines and protocols which invoke them – exist as policy artefacts to be implemented, by different actors across various contexts. Much of the literature on NAPs – and on the WPS agenda more broadly – focuses on the problems of, and gaps in, implementation (see, for example, Tryggestad, 2009; Shawki, 2017; Reiling, 2017). The most comprehensive, and perhaps significant, engagement with implementation was the 2015 publication entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (Coomaraswamy et al, 2015); the Executive Summary affirms the focus on implementation, noting several achievements but also concluding that ‘obstacles and challenges still persist and prevent the full implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda’ (Coomaraswamy et al, 2015, p 14).

Questions about the factors impeding full implementation remain. The literature on WPS implementation tends to offer a range of explanations for failures of implementation that cohere around three poles: 1) lack of resources (see, for example, Willett, 2010; Dharmapuri, 2013; Shepherd and True, 2014); 2) lack of political will (see, for example, Fujio, 2008; George, 2014; Basini and Ryan, 2016); and 3) lack of understanding about the ‘true’ WPS principles that ought to be prioritized and thus operationalized (see, for example, Reeves, 2012; Shepherd, 2016). All of these explanations are plausible, and, arguably on the balance of evidence from the works cited here, most sites of implementation manifest one or more of these inhibitors at different times. Though plausible, and empirically verifiable, they are not, however, very revealing in terms of the degrees of contestation over WPS practices and the differentiation that occurs within various WPS contexts over time.

Further, acknowledging impediments to implementation sidesteps the question of how implementation is monitored and evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation of the evidence base on which judgements about implementation are founded is contested across many contexts of WPS practice (see, for example, Gumru and Fritz, 2009; Fritz, Doering and Gumru, 2011; Lee-Koo, 2016). There have certainly been a number of striking claims made about WPS implementation and the difference that effective implementation makes in the world: consider, for example, frequently cited data about correlation between women's participation and durability of peace agreements. The fact is that, until recently, there was very limited empirical proof of such correlation, because the numbers of women involved in peace processes at any stage were vanishingly small. UN Women and the US Council on Foreign Relations data suggests that 'women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators, and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes' between 1990 and 2017 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019, np). A significant volume of research effort has therefore been focused on generating the evidence base from which claims about WPS implementation can be persuasively made (see, for example, O'Reilly et al, 2015; Paffenholz et al, 2016; Krause et al, 2018). These efforts have borne fruit. As the *Global Study* concludes, 'recent research ... provides concrete evidence that women's participation is linked to better outcomes in general, and that the inclusiveness of peace processes and the democratization of conflict resolution are crucial to sustained peace and stability' (Coomaraswamy et al, 2015, p 4).

In tandem with the development of robust quantitative evidence regarding WPS implementation, there has also proliferated other modes of quantifying WPS, in the form of implementation trackers and indices. A specific 'Women, Peace and Security Index', for example, was launched in October 2017 by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) in the USA and the Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Norway. The WPS Index claims to offer a 'comprehensive measure of women's wellbeing and their empowerment in homes, communities, and societies more broadly' (GIWPS, 2019) and ranks 153 countries according to their score across three domains: inclusion, justice and security. It captures some aspects of WPS principles in an appealingly simple single digit, but the data that lies behind this digit requires careful consideration. One concern is that 'the WPS Index relies on only one measure of conflict, one that has been criticized by feminist security analysts for male bias: the number of battle deaths' (Goetz, 2018, np). Using battle deaths as an

indicator skews the count of violence in favour of the global North; measures of militarization and military spending would better capture violence as it is arguably understood by supporters of WPS. A second issue relates to the absence of efforts to measure women's participation in peacework and conflict prevention. 'There is data available on the vibrancy of, and rights afforded to, civil society movements across the world, which suggests that such spaces are under threat even in so-called developed countries' (Mundkur and Shepherd, 2018, np). Given the centrality of women's civil society leadership and organization to the WPS agenda, the inability of the WPS Index to measure this dimension of WPS work is a problem.

As their advocates argue, '[g]lobal indices are increasingly popular because they can distil an array of complex information into a single number' (Klugman et al, 2018, p 2). Sometimes, however, systems are defined by complexity. Attempts to reduce complex information can lead to comparisons being drawn across contexts that are not necessarily comparable. Further, some dimensions of WPS

are next to impossible to quantify, such as the nature of engagement by women's groups with peace negotiators and the quality of a transitional justice arrangement from a gender equality perspective. Indicators of these conflict-specific processes do exist ... [but] They are not intended to enable comparisons between cases of peace talks or recovery programmes; each one is almost too anomalous to make comparative analysis meaningful. (Goetz, 2018, np)

Including these dimensions in an Index, or even the act of creating a WPS Index itself, brings into being a vision of WPS that has certain characteristics and qualities, shaping a world in which comparisons across diverse contexts can easily be summarized in numerical form. In the search for evidence of effective WPS implementation, and the adoption of WPS provisions and principles worldwide, it seems important to take heed of Sally Engle Merry's insight that 'those who create indicators aspire to measure the world but, in practice, create the world they are measuring' (Merry, 2016, p 21).

The world of WPS, as we go forward into the next two decades, will likely retain familiar elements while developing in unexpected directions, much as it has for the past two decades. A small number of WPS issues will no doubt continue to receive the lion's share of institutional and scholarly attention, while progress on a larger number will stagnate or even be reversed. Financing, for example, remains

a key concern for everyone doing WPS work: the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF, formerly the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action) received US \$3,026,834 from donors in 2017, representing a drop of over half a million dollars from the previous year (United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, 2019, np). Moreover, as of the time of writing, only ten UN member states have contributed to the Fund since its creation in 2016.<sup>5</sup> World military spending, meanwhile, increased in real terms by 1.1% in 2017 (SIPRI, 2018, np). There is not much cause for optimism that such patterns of spending will change. Relatedly, women's economic empowerment in post-conflict and conflict-affected settings remains a priority for the WPS agenda, although not necessarily a priority shared by those involved in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery. 'The clear gender inequality in women's access to resources is not simply caused by the presence of conflict. It is also a reflection of non-prioritization of women's needs and the relegation of women to small-scale and local peripheral initiatives' (UN Women, 2018, np).

Over the past two decades, it has been tricky to generate momentum in other areas of WPS practice, such as the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations (setting aside for a moment the question of what 'meaningful' actually means), and the protection of female human rights defenders. The latter 'are fighting a lonely battle. Many die a lonely death from weapons that are meant to protect them' (UN Women, 2018, np). Taking seriously the ways in which women participate in nurturing, ensuring and sustaining peace and enabling them to realize their human, political, civil and economics rights is the familiar terrain of the WPS agenda. As the contributions to this collection demonstrate, we have travelled a long way towards realizing WPS in the world and yet, in the words of the poet Robert Frost, we yet have promises to keep ... and miles to go before we sleep.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This data is drawn from a search of records held by the Web of Science citation indexing platform. All results were generated from a search conducted on 25 February 2019 for the topics 'Women, Peace and Security agenda' or 'women, peace and security' or 'Resolution 1325' or 'UNSCR 1325' across all available databases in the 2000–2018 period. 'Topics' in the Web of Science capture references to designated terms in the title, abstract or keywords of academic articles indexed in the collection. This search returning 243 hits, which were subsequently compiled and manually checked. Where multiple book chapters were listed in the search results, these were consolidated into a single reference (such as, for example, for Hudson, 2010). Where individual chapters in edited volumes were returned, these

were included *without* also listing the volume as a whole as a separate item. Where book chapters in edited volumes explicitly referring to WPS (such as in the title) were returned, the volume as a whole was checked, leading to the inclusion of other chapters that may not have been returned by the initial search but which were clearly WPS-related by virtue of their place in the volume. Where an edited book referred only in part to WPS (for example, Heathcote [ed], 2014) only those chapters returned in the Web of Science search were listed. Where articles in special issues were not returned as part of the initial search, they were not included (for example, Nordas and Rustad on SEA in *International Interactions* SI, 2013). The resulting list includes 240 distinct WPS publications over 18 years.

- <sup>2</sup> That the timing is closely related to waves of *political* interest in WPS may be inferred by noting the timing of National Action Plans, which also tend to cluster around landmark anniversaries.
- <sup>3</sup> Pieces which do not signal their relation to the WPS agenda less directly may be included through a different strategy. A Google Scholar search for the occurrence of the exact phrase ‘Women, Peace and Security agenda’ in the same 2000–2018 period returns approximately 1,390 results. The Google Scholar and Web of Science collections are not directly comparable. The larger set of returns from the former reflects not just that WPS may be examined in the main body of an article, but also that the agenda has come to serve as a ready example of wider trends, and material for larger debates, on issues from inclusive statebuilding (Langhi, 2014: 205) to changing masculinities (Vess et al, 2013) to the characteristics of a feminist security studies (Wibben, 2014).
- <sup>4</sup> For information on the development and progression of NAPs within and across countries, see [www.wpsnaps.org](http://www.wpsnaps.org).
- <sup>5</sup> They are Australia, Austria, Canada, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom.

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