DIŞ POLİTİKADA KADINLAR
WOMEN IN FOREIGN POLICY

Chartering the Politics and Challenges of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda:

An Interview with Soumita Basu and Laura J. Shepherd by Bilge Şahin

This is a conversation between Soumita Basu (SB), Laura J. Shepherd (LJS), and Bilge Şahin (BS). All three have worked on issues related to gender, peace, and conflict for many years, and have engaged with both the sequence of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions that form the core architecture of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and aspects of state and civil society engagement with the Agenda. The following answers provide a thoughtful account of the history and politics of the WPS Agenda. In this conversation, Basu and Shepherd touch on fundamental discussions around the WPS Agenda and recommend further readings.

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Bilge Şahin (BS): When the first resolution of the WPS Agenda, Resolution 1325, was adopted in 2000, it was often hailed as ground-breaking by feminist scholars. What do you think about the symbolic and political importance of Resolution 1325? Has its symbolism changed between 2000 and today?

Soumita Basu (SB): Yes, we hear that often; additionally, 'landmark' and 'watershed' are used to describe the passage of Resolution 1325. As would be apparent from even a quick reading of the Resolution, it takes account of the gendered nature of war and peace making and the multiple ways in which women and girls are positioned in conflict and post-conflict settings (for instance, as peacemakers, refugees, former combatants etc.). In so doing, it symbolises the success of gender advocates – from civil society, the UN and specific member states – in bringing what we know as the WPS Agenda into the highest international decision-making body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, i.e., the UN Security Council. This is ground-breaking because, before 2000, the Council had considered gender in limited ways, primarily with reference to women as victims of armed conflict.

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, the Director of the LSE's Centre for WPS since 2019, has described the resolution as a "proverbial Trojan Horse" (2007: 197), suggesting that the advocates managed to sneak gender-related concerns into an institution that was otherwise hostile to such issues. Certainly, not all member states were on board. And, as we have come to know, there were "positional differences on UN Security Council Resolution 1325" within the civil society as well, prior to and after the passage of the Resolution; Roshmi Goswami, Kumudini Samuel and Nighat S. Khan – feminist peace advocates from South Asia – have asserted, for instance, that they would have preferred a General Assembly resolution, as all countries and not just those identified as being in conflict should pay attention to gender equality (Goswami et al., 2017: 74). There were also worries about the WPS Agenda being associated with the Council, an infamously undemocratic body that is led by the five permanent member states, all of whom have been complicit – in one way or another – in multiple armed conflicts across the world. The Resolution, from this perspective, has fed into gender-washing militarized and neo-imperialist international practices that emanated from the UN Security Council. This contention was borne out in the ways in which the WPS Agenda was incorporated into the international interventions in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards.

That said, the passage of Resolution 1325 was part of broader efforts to reimagine the meaning of international peace and security, at the turn of the millennium. In 1999-2000, we see resolutions on protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflicts, and HIV/AIDS. Many in the international community were genuinely looking to center human dimensions of peace and security, including the gender aspect, in policy considerations. I am sure we will go on to discuss the limitations of the Resolution and the WPS Agenda as well, but it is important to recognize that Resolution – from its earliest days – became a valuable tool for feminist peace activists to draw attention to the gender dimensions of peace and security, and to call for, among others, recognition to and formal inclusion of women in peacemaking efforts.

In recent years, Resolution 1325 – and the WPS Agenda, more broadly – have come to symbolize both the positive and negative aspects that I've just outlined. The optimism of October 2000 has been tempered over the last 20 years. Still, most critics too would acknowledge the attention – along with valuable resources – that the Resolution and related policy architecture has brought to gender issues vis-à-vis armed conflicts.

BS: The adoption of the WPS Agenda by the UN Security Council resulted from strong feminist activism and advocacy. However, the WPS Agenda is often seen as a bargaining process between the UN Security Council, a state-centred and militarist body, and feminist ideals. Considering this permanent negotiation of ideals, what issues have been prioritized and which ones have been marginalized by the Agenda?

Laura J. Shepherd (LJS): This is a huge question and one that has been tackled by many feminist scholars over the years. Dianne Otto's work is particularly instructive here, I think. She was one of the first researchers to take on the question of co-optation of a feminist agenda by the Council in a sustained way (although of course there were many other notable contributions to this debate – I'm thinking here of the 2004 conversation piece in *International Feminist Journal of Politics* by Carol Cohn, Helen Kinsella, and Sheri Gibbings, the essay on the role of NGOs in mobilising the Agenda by Felicity Hill, Mikele Aboitiz, and Sara Poehlman-Doumbouya, as well as Sam Cook's excellent article from 2009 titled "Security Council Resolution 1820: On Militarism, Flashlights, Raincoats, and Rooms with Doors – A Political Perspective on Where It Came From and What It Adds").

In her essay on the "power and danger" of the articulation of a feminist peace project onto the Agenda of the UN Security Council, Otto (2010) elaborates on what has been achieved and what has been sacrificed in the ten years between the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and her analysis. She is careful to point out that feminist ideas and ideals have gained a measure of institutional power through engagement with the Security Council; it was no small achievement by the feminist advocates and activists who campaigned and networked for it to secure an item on the Council's Agenda devoted to the discussion of "women and peace and security" back in 2000. But Otto also accounts for the trade-offs that were necessary to move the Agenda forward and the ways in which feminists inside and outside of the UN had to make compromises and, in some cases, give up altogether on aspects of the goals they were trying to achieve.

It's probably not a coincidence that the reason I enjoy Otto's essay so much is that she arrives at the same conclusion I often reach in my own thinking about the tensions between the Council and the expression of feminist ideas, which is that there is much more ownership outside of the Council than within. The ways that the Agenda is deployed and reinterpreted and leveraged in different contexts by different feminist movements is ungovernable from the Council chambers in New York. This is of course not to say that the Council is irrelevant: we saw in April 2019 with the tense and difficult negotiations over text on sexual and reproductive health rights in UN Security Council Resolutions 2467 that state representatives and Council dynamics can have a profoundly deleterious effect on the Agenda that is hard to undo. But I think there is enough of substance in the Agenda now to sustain the feminist peace community in their efforts, just as the feminist peace community continues to sustain the Agenda.

BS: The WPS Agenda is established on four pillars: protection, participation, prevention, and relief and recovery. Can you briefly elaborate on the meaning of these principles and the problems that arise from them? What have been the achievements of each of the pillars?

LJS: I think what is particularly interesting for me about the pillars is the way that they have emerged over time. As you know, the WPS Agenda only really cohered around these four pillars in 2010, thanks to the Secretary-General's report that year (S/2010/173), which gave an account of activity related to the implementation of resolution 1325 and related resolutions against those four pillars. Before that, the Agenda was seen to comprise five pillars, as detailed in the second UN System-Wide

Action Plan (S/2007/567); the fifth pillar was the normative dimension of the Agenda, which was deemed by 2010 to cut across the other pillars and so was folded in to reporting against the four pillars we know today. But it is not unusual to see national action plans, for example, from the 2007-2010 period, detailing WPS initiatives against those five pillars from the 2007 Action Plan.

Regarding the question of what each of these pillars means, that is another aspect of what makes WPS such a fascinating object of study. There is always going to be contestation over the meaning of the four pillars around which the Agenda has developed because the meaning of each is multiple. This is evident in the articulation of each pillar in the 2007 Action Plan (S/2007/567, para. 42):

> (a) Prevention: mainstream a gender perspective into all conflict prevention activities and strategies, develop effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms and institutions, and strengthen efforts to prevent violence against women, including various forms of gender-based violence.
>
> (b) Participation: promote and support women's active and meaningful participation in all peace processes as well as their representation in formal and informal decision-making at all levels; improve partnership and networking with local and international women's rights groups and organizations; recruit and appoint women to senior positions in the UN, including Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, and in peacekeeping forces, including military, police, and civilian personnel.
>
> (c) Protection: strengthen and amplify efforts to secure the safety, physical or mental health, well-being, economic security, and/ or dignity of women and girls; promote and safeguard human rights of women and mainstream a gender perspective into the legal and institutional reforms.
>
> (d) Relief and recovery: promote women's equal access to aid distribution mechanisms and services, including those dealing with the specific needs of women and girls in all relief recovery efforts.
>
> (e) Normative: develop policy frameworks; ensure effective coordination and awareness raising to advance the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

It is clear from the above that prevention, for example, includes both prevention of conflict (through the development of gender-sensitive early-warning systems) and the prevention of gender-based violence, so it is extremely wide-ranging – even though it is arguably, as Soumita Basu and Catia Confortini neatly put it, the "weakest 'p' in the pod" of the agenda (Basu and Confortini, 2017). Similarly, participation involves both the inclusion of women in peace processes (which is commonly understood as a priority of the Agenda) and the recruitment of women as UN personnel and in peacekeeping forces. Many UN member states have acted on participation by increasing the proportion of women in their armed forces, which is seen as problematic by those supporters of the Agenda who see it as fundamentally an anti-militarist agenda, aimed at reducing military force worldwide.

I think this is one of the issues with the pillars: that they are interpreted so differently by different stakeholders. But actually, that is true of the Agenda as a whole – what WPS means to one group of people might vary significantly from what it means to another group of people, and because there are so many sources of WPS "truth", it's hard to sustain the claim that one group is right and the other is wrong. Even if we go back to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as the foundational resolution,

many aspects of that text are open to different interpretations and/or create multiple meanings of core WPS provisions and principles. This may be part of the reason that the pillar structure is appealing, because it provides a neat and orderly structure, but as we have seen, it really perpetuates the complexity!

BS: Women's experiences in conflict and peace are all affected by multifaceted gendered power relations. However, in international politics, there is a tendency to marginalize and simplify gender. To what extent is gender acknowledged in the WPS Agenda? Is it possible to consider other gendered identities under the Agenda, or are there any limitations? Where do Masculinities and Queer identities stand?

LJS: Well, I am on the record in my earliest written work saying that UN Security Council Resolution 1325 reproduces the idea that gender is a synonym for women, as Terrell Carver (1996) famously put it, so it is interesting to reflect on where we are now, more than 20 years after the drafting and adoption of the first WPS resolution. There are three points I would raise in relation to this question of where gender is "at" in the WPS Agenda in contemporary global politics. First, I would say that it doesn't make sense to me to talk about if or how "the WPS Agenda" acknowledges gender, because as I was saying above, there are many different enactments or performances of the WPS Agenda and each express and address gender (as both power relation and identity category) in its own way. Second, even if we limit our understanding of the Agenda to the adopted Security Council resolutions (and there is good reason *not* to do this, but let us go with it!), the duality of gender as a power relation and identity category is embedded into those resolutions. All of the WPS resolutions present mandates related to the operation of gendered power (through, for example, calls for "gender advisors" or for concerted effort related to "gender mainstreaming") *as well as* using gendered identity categories (women, men, boys, etc.). The tricky thing about policy documents is that they require the meaning of those categories to be at least temporarily stable, so actually internally the documents work against the understanding of gender as a relation of power by attempting to "fix" it as a simply descriptive category. Once again, the intrinsic complexity of the Agenda makes it very difficult to answer this question in a straightforward way! But the third thing I would comment on, to introduce a note of optimism, is the fact that since 2000 we have seen the expansion of the different types of identity category that is considered within the Agenda.

There has been some really exciting work on the recognition of queer, or LGTBQI+, people and communities within the WPS Agenda; Jamie Hagen's work on queering the WPS Agenda, drawing on her extensive fieldwork in Colombia, has been very influential here. And while we have not yet seen language related to the protection of LGTBQI+ rights in WPS resolutions or presidential statements, several countries include such language in their "national action plans" (NAPs), which express WPS commitments in relation to domestic policy frameworks and guide implementation of the Agenda in those country contexts. Japan's current NAP, for example, specifically mentions "LGBT people" in a discussion of "inclusive support" to foster participation "in all processes of prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts and decision making". Meanwhile, South Africa's NAP includes targets related to the reduction of homophobic violence, which firmly embeds LGTBQI+ rights in the WPS Agenda in that setting. Conceptually, as well as empirically, however, there is still a long way to go, and I would really recommend Chamindra Weerawardhana's 2018 essay, "Profoundly Decolonizing? Reflections on a Transfeminist Perspective of International Relations", to people who are interested in exploring this intellectual terrain.

The inclusion of "men and boys" has been somewhat less controversial. The fact that men and boys are frequently victims of sexual violence in conflict as well as its perpetrators was recognised in the preamble of UN Security Council Resolution 2106. In 2015, UN Security Council Resolution 2242 reaffirmed the importance of working with men and boys "as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, peacebuilding and post-conflict situations". It was not until the adoption of resolution 2467, however, that the Council stressed that men and boys who survived sexual violence in conflict should have "access to national relief and reparations programmes, as well as health care, psychosocial care, safe shelter, livelihood support and legal aid" and urged member states "to protect victims who are men and boys through the strengthening of policies that offer appropriate responses to male survivors and challenge cultural assumptions about male invulnerability to such violence". This is a significant shift and of course we have colleagues interrogating this shift and what it means for the possible futures of the WPS Agenda – people like Paul Kirby (2012), Hannah Wright (2020), David Duriesmith (2020) and Henri Myrttinen (2019), for example.

BS: 'Gender mainstreaming' is an organizational policy of the UN. How is it defined, and what is the relation of the WPS Agenda to gender mainstreaming? What are the impacts of gender mainstreaming and the WPS on other policy areas such as foreign policy and sustainable development goals?

SB: My go-to definition for 'gender mainstreaming' is the one from the UN Economic and Social Council: "mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels" (UN ECOSOC, 1997). While such calls had been made in one form or another earlier as well, it was in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PfA), the key outcome document of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in 1995, that gender mainstreaming got a real push. As mentioned on the UN Women (2020) website, the Beijing PfA "was the first global policy framework to confirm gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for realizing gender equality and elevated its significance by calling on governments and other actors to apply it to all policies and programmes." Notably, the document also identified 'women and armed conflict' as a critical area of concern; this recognition played a crucial part in building the momentum for the passage of Resolution 1325. In Resolution 1325, gender mainstreaming is invoked in relation to UN peacekeeping operations, but there are calls for inclusion of 'gender perspective' in other contexts as well. Subsequent WPS resolutions – nine more WPS resolutions have been adopted from 2008 onwards – as well as related policy documents make more detailed references, in context of all four pillars of the WPS Agenda. For instance, in the excerpt from the 2007 Action Plan that Laura cited here, mainstreaming is explicitly mentioned in relation to both prevention and protection.

Fairly early on, Niamh Reilly had written, "the transformative potential of SCR 1325 relies upon it being understood as an interlocking piece in a growing body of international commitments to women's human rights, gender equality and gender mainstreaming" (2007: 167-168). Conversely, you'll find that the preambular paragraphs of the WPS resolutions invoke a whole range of gender-related international documents, including the SDGs. As such, the WPS Agenda both bolsters and is realised through relevant policies at various levels.

The question on impact is pertinent, as one may well ask about the point of it all – mechanisms such as gender mainstreaming or international policies such as the WPS resolutions. To begin with, the fact that countries are considering the gender dimension in their foreign policies or that SDG 5 –

'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' – exists is due to decades of feminist advocacy. Are these 'cost-free' references? No. It is useful to look up websites of UN Women, the UN Department of Peace Operations, and PeaceWomen as well as the centres/institutes at Georgetown University, the London School of Economics and Political Science and Monash University for up-to-date data and analysis.

BS: Some countries frequently refuse to implement national action plans on the WPS Agenda, arguing that they are neither in a conflict nor in a post-conflict situation. Civil society organizations occasionally share this sentiment and, as a result, ignore advocating it. Should we approach the WPS Agenda within the narrow confines of conflict, or should it have broader applicability?

LJS: I guess for me there are a few tensions here. It is important to acknowledge where there is contestation within a country over whether a NAP is desirable or not, or whether WPS principles and provisions would be useful and beneficial in pursuit of sustainable, gender-sensitive peace. Sometimes we've seen civil society organisations leveraging the existence of the WPS Agenda, or other international human rights frameworks, to exert pressure on national governments in their advocacy and activism. I can't think of any examples where the opposite is true, where civil society organisations are pushing back against the development of a NAP and the national government is really committed to going ahead with it. I mean, there are plenty of examples of contexts in which civil society organisations have argued that national governments could be doing NAP work much better, of course! I think that is most often the case, and this relates to the sense of ownership that civil society actors feel in relation to the Agenda.

It may be, of course, that the Agenda is not offering the right framework for the kinds of issues that civil society organisations want to mobilise around in a particular setting. I suspect – though I am certainly not an expert in Pacific politics – that this may be the case with women's movements in the Blue Pacific, where youth justice, gender justice, and environmental justice movements are working together to draw attention to the devastating effects of climate change in the region. I don't think that the WPS Agenda offers radical enough visions of security to accommodate this political movement, so although some Pacific Island nations have issues NAPs (Togo and Solomon Islands, for example), I can see why advocates and activists are expending their energies elsewhere.

In terms of the question of (post-)conflict, I personally believe that the WPS Agenda can be transformative in and for all societies, and that as scholars, practitioners, advocates, and activists, we need to reflect on the work that our concepts of peace, conflict, security, and gender are doing to limit our imaginations regarding the kinds of systemic changes that are needed to create lasting peace and security for all. The definition of conflict/post-conflict is an aspect of this. It is also a way of national governments denying the relevance of WPS in their context when actually WPS provisions and principles might provide a framework for enhanced rights protections and security. And the final point I would make in relation to the temporalities of conflict that are embedded in the WPS Agenda is in regard to the denial of (ongoing) colonial violence in settler colonial contexts. The definition of "post-conflict" – and indeed conflict itself – is not usually expansive enough to include colonial violence, even though settler colonial societies have much still to reckon with in terms of reconciliation, reparation, and justice for Indigenous peoples and communities. This is an important area for WPS scholarship and advocacy in the future.

BS: What are the new and emerging issues within academic discussions on the WPS Agenda? What is your opinion about extending the Agenda to new areas – would this strengthen the initial feminist objectives, or are there any practical or discursive concerns?

LJS: This question really leads on quite nicely from my answer to the previous question! As indicated, I think that academics and advocates are beginning to explore and challenge forms of coloniality in the Agenda – not limited to interrogating how WPS is being enacted in settler colonial contexts and with what effects for both collective understandings of (post-)conflict but also for Indigenous justice projects, this body of work also engages questions of how the implementation of the WPS Agenda by different countries can reproduce and reinforce existing racialised hierarchies in global politics – Swati Parashar (2019), Maria Martin de Almagro (2018), and Toni Haastrup and Jamie Hagen (2020, 2021) have all written persuasively on aspects of this issue. So, I think that is an important field of research that will have implications for future WPS practice.

Another related but separate, area of scholarship and practice where there is energy in the WPS Agenda at the moment is in relation to the concept of intersectionality, and diversity and inclusion initiatives (Marsha Henry wrote an excellent essay on this topic in 2021 titled "On the necessity of critical race feminism for women, peace and security"). There are a couple of different strands of this work that I think are important. First is the need to recognise that women are not a homogenous group. All identities are constituted in and through multiple intersecting relations of power, of which gender is just one. In order to be a politically useful framework for all women, the WPS Agenda needs to take account of how gender – particularly womanhood, given the Agenda's title – intersects with race, class, able-bodiedness, religion, sexuality, and so on to create different forms of exclusion that affect differently embodied people in different ways. This matters not only for questions of protection (who, for example, are considered more or less "ideal" victims of violence?) but also for questions of participation (what does it mean to advocate for the inclusion of "women" in peace talks and does it matter *which* women are included?) Second, taking seriously the concept of intersectionality can encourage diverse connections between the WPS Agenda and other political movements. As Audre Lorde famously said, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" ([1979] 2017). It may be that WPS can relate in generative ways to anti-racist movements, Indigenous land rights movements, climate justice movements, and so on.

It is probably just reflective of where my own thinking is at, but I would like to see the WPS Agenda opening up to these interrogations of coloniality, and intersectionality, because I think this is where the most compelling feminist political theory is being written at the moment. For me, the WPS Agenda has always had an important, if ambivalent, relationship with feminist ethics and I suspect that proponents – both academic and practitioner – have a lot of learn from the intellectual contributions of Black and Indigenous feminists and feminists, notably women of colour, who use the concept of intersectionality in their theoretical work and praxis.

BS: NAPs are significant to operationalize the WPS Agenda. Nevertheless, the potential of these plans depends on how governments choose to implement them. What have been some achievements and issues of national action plans so far? To what extent do grassroots women's organizations or feminist civil society groups engage with NAPs?

SB: Building on what Laura said earlier, time and again, WPS advocates have underlined the importance of member states in realizing the WPS Agenda; and, NAPs – as you point out – are significant in this respect. As of February 2023, 105 UN member states have adopted NAPs, even

though – as the PeaceWomen website notes – approximately a third of the NAPs have expired either in 2021 or in previous years. Further, the ones that are functional may not be so in practice. Taking a few steps back, key questions need to be asked about the adoption of the NAP itself. Questions such as: what are the processes by which the NAP was drafted, and which actors were involved? Which ministries are responsible for its implementation? Is the NAP outward- and/or inward-looking? Have provisions been made for consultations with women's organizations and civil society groups? Has a budget been allocated? So, for instance, as Hamilton et al, note in their study of NAPs, "most budgets either have no or very little specification of how the NAP-producing country intends to fund their NAP activities" (2020: 13). Having closely followed the adoption (and implementation) of three NAPs in South Asia (Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh), I am also quite interested in the role that international actors such as UN entities and donor states play in these processes.

Yet, critics also recognize that potential inherent in the NAPs; as Jacevic writes, NAPs "represent an important instrument, both of policy and practice and advocacy, to continue to strengthen institutional efforts for change" (2019: 287-288). For these reasons, civil society actors have been at the forefront of advocating for the adoption and implementation of NAPs. And, like the WPS resolutions, many NAPs recognise the importance of engaging with grassroots women's organisations and feminist civil society groups in realising the WPS Agenda. Of course, the government may have different ideas from that of civil society actors about which issues are important and what needs to be done. So, it can get contentious. It is also worth noting that there may be differences within the non-governmental groups themselves. For instance, in their review of NAP assessments in WPS scholarship, K.C. and Whetstone conclude that "NAP implementation is often led and owned by NGO women representatives, so-called 'armchair' protestors due to their distance from the grassroots, in partnership with local officials" (2022: 4). It then becomes important to not only interrogate the NAPs, and the space they make for consultations with non-governmental actors at various stages, but to be attentive to who it is that speaks on behalf of civil society. For further information, in addition to the resources that I have already recommended, I'd direct the readers to the most recent version of the WPS NAPs analysis hosted by the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security (Biddolph and Shepherd, 2022).

BS: How are power relations between the Global North and the Global South reflected in the WPS Agenda? Does, as some critics have argued, the WPS Agenda constitute an 'imperialist policy' or did the Global South play a significant role in the development and implementation of the Agenda?

SB: I find that the South-North dimension is most strongly reflected in the political economy of the WPS Agenda; the question is who has the money – and is willing to spend it – to implement the WPS Agenda. After all, implementation requires resources. It is primarily donors (state and non-state) from the Global North that have the capacity and willingness to prioritize gender concerns. While donors may well make efforts to factor in local WPS expertise, it is to be expected that their organisational interests are prioritized. This can potentially limit the scope for what can be done to implement the WPS Agenda. In the context of Sri Lanka, Nesiah writes:

> Resolution 1325-focused work has been happy to endorse a narrowed discussion of economic reform as long as it integrates women economic actors into fabric of macropolitical economic policy advanced by the international financial institutions and donor governments more generally…by focusing on the inclusion of women as economic actors rather than the specific economic policies within which they act (2012: 148).

This is illustrative of the ways in which certain ideas about what WPS implementation entails come to dominate the Agenda. It has wider implications, including for colleagues in the Global North. Reflecting on their participation in the development of the third Finnish NAP, for instance, Lyytikäinen and Jauhola find that "the NAP emerges as a tool of global neoliberal governmentality of gendered foreign affairs, defence policies and expertise on such themes" (2020: 83). At the micro-level, the winners and losers in this 'business-as-usual', and those who challenge it, are spread across the South-North divide; at the macro-level, it is possible to see that in a number of crucial ways, the drivers of the dominant strands of the WPS Agenda are located in the Global North.

Does this mean that the WPS Agenda is an 'imperialist policy'? There is some strong defence of this argument in the existing literature on the subject (see, among others, Achilleos-Sarll, 2020; Aroussi, 2017; Parashar 2019). With the Security Council being the institutional home of the WPS resolutions, this is not surprising. We are also nowhere close to realizing the transformative potential of the WPS Agenda. Yet, to make invisible the Global South – except as recipients of this Agenda – would be doing a huge disservice to the tremendous contributions from all across the world, including the peripheries, in the development and implementation of the WPS Agenda. I have written about this elsewhere (Basu, 2016), but I will cite again prominent feminist peace advocates from my region, who are critics of the Agenda: "Notwithstanding ambiguity around the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the role South Asian women played on [in] foregrounding the WPS Agenda should not be underestimated" (Goswami et al., 2017: 75). Let us also recall that Femmes Africa Solidarité was one of the six founding members of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. One could go on.

BS: Can you chart a potential future trajectory of the WPS Agenda in academia and at a policy level? What are its potentials and risks moving forward?

SB: In her remarks earlier, Laura has already highlighted the growing scholarship on decolonizing the WPS Agenda as well as the need for intersectionality in the work that we do. Both are crucial for us, moving forward. Also, as has been noted, WPS has taken multiple forms – there is just a lot going on! Around the time I began my research on resolution 1325, I recall being curious about efforts to link it to health (Jansen, 2006) and natural disasters (Shah, 2006). But that is par for the course in 2023. I am excited to see the variation in themes that are discussed under the broad rubric of the WPS Agenda today, in scholarly works and at the policy level. As Laura says, multiple – sometimes divergent – groups interpret and use the Agenda for their own specific goals. This has entailed relating WPS to SDGs (Balakrishnan and Dharmaraj, 2019) as well as drawing reportedly suspect linkages with the countering violent extremism (CVE) Agenda (Ní Aoláin, 2016). One could argue that WPS has become ubiquitous in feminist research and policies, particularly in matters of peace and security. I see it as a highly productive terrain on which scholars and practitioners both contest and synthesize ideas about gender, peace and security. As such, the WPS Agenda remains valuable, the problems with implementation notwithstanding.

The trajectory of the Agenda would be shaped by its advocates (and detractors). But at least we can be assured that – as Security Council resolutions, at the very least – WPS cannot 'expire' or be unwritten. A feminist foreign policy could go out of vogue due to changes in domestic regime; an international policy, however, endures. Going by the developments in recent years, I expect WPS to be increasingly factored into policy deliberations on urgent international issues, from climate change to cybersecurity. The risks of co-option, exclusionary politics and militarization are no doubt there. This is where advocates would do well to be guided by feminist ethics. In this respect, let us not forget

that the WPS Agenda – in all its complexities – is one manifestation of feminist peace. A lot is done to engender peace and security, outside of what gets labelled as WPS. To realize the transformative potential of the WPS Agenda, it is important that its advocates are ultimately guided by the normative vision of feminist peace. One might contend that this is unlikely in the hustle of political compromises. Then again, who would have thought – at the times of its founding in 1945 – that the Security Council would have ten resolutions on women, peace and security?

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