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COMMENTARY

Women Peace and Security: Adrift in Policy and Practice

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Abstract

This comment reflects on how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been translated into policy and put into practice by the European Union and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although the WPS agenda has enabled many gains by women peacebuilders, this comment identifies important challenges from these two very different contexts. First, situating WPS policy areas within a broader feminist political economy analysis demonstrates how little influence the WPS agenda has across government. Second, the WPS agenda is being (mis)used to promote heteronormative, patriarchal understanding of 'gender', stripped of any power dynamics and excluding any gender identities that do not conform. The result, then, is that WPS policies and practice are adrift in the patriarchal policy mainstream.

Keywords Feminism · Women peace and security · European Union · Democratic Republic of Congo · Gender · Political economy analysis

Introduction

This comment draws on experience working in and with societies affected by conflict over the past two decades and in particular in working with women and women's associations in these contexts. It reflects on the 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) Agenda, based on a set of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), starting with UNSCR 1325 in 2000.[1] These UNSCRs on WPS have focused on the need for women's participation in some aspects of peace and security (O'Rourke 2014), and they have underscored the criminal rather than inevitable nature of harms, particularly sexual violence, inflicted women and girls during conflict. The UNSCR on WPS, and the National Action Plans have also provided a

[1] They are: Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).

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much-needed platform for women and women's organisations to voice their opinions and space for activism far from New York (Otto 2010).

Nearly 20 years on, the WPS agenda has undoubtedly made important gains for women peacebuilders and has contributed to some justice for violations committed against women and girls. Yet women and girls still suffer extensive human rights violations, including sexual violence. They are still largely excluded from peace processes and leadership in public life more generally, particularly in relation to questions of security, war and peace. The UN is still to appoint a female Secretary General, and while both of the European Union's (EU) High Representatives for Foreign Affairs and Security to date have been women, in 2015, less than 20% of its Heads of Delegation are women—fewer than in 2013. These figures are important because the UN and EU are both organisations with (potentially) global reach that claim to be committed to the WPS agenda. Yet, they demonstrate that their structures do not, cannot or will not support female leadership on an equal basis as male leadership, a central tenet of that agenda. Even if policy-makers accept that the WPS agenda is important, it is too often displaced by more urgent matters. Given the increasingly masculinised polarisation of world politics and the dismantling of the liberal world order in favour of confrontation, both direct and though proxy, the WPS agenda looks increasingly urgent as well as important.

This commentary reflects on WPS policy and practice in EU foreign policy and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the EU has also played an active role, including on the WPS agenda. Despite the manifold differences between the two examples, there are two key similarities. First, analysis of WPS policies in the context of the broader political forces at play, that is situating these policy areas within a broader feminist political economy analysis, demonstrates how little influence the WPS agenda has across government. Second, the WPS agenda is being (mis)used to promote heteronormative, patriarchal understanding of 'gender', stripped of any power dynamics and excluding any gender identities that do not conform. The result, then, is that WPS policies and practice are adrift in a patriarchal policy mainstream, to extend Charlesworth's metaphor (2005), unable to affect its course.

Women, Peace and Security in EU Foreign Policy

Perceptions of the EU as a global actor are highly gendered: "Americans are from Mars, Europeans from Venus" (Kagan 2003) or the EU as the "metrosexual superpower" (Khanna 2009). The stereotype is of the EU as soft, civilian, feminine, choosing persuasion over coercion in dealing with those who might penetrate her delicate borders. It will remain weak until it is able to develop a hard, masculine, militarized identity. Maria Stern challenged this stereotype by analysing the gender and colonial tropes of the European Security Strategy (ESS) *A secure Europe in a better World* (European Council 2003), concluding that the EU acts as a "civilising patriarch", that aims "to civilize barbaric Others through, at best, example, and at worst, force" (Stern 2011, 50).

In 2016, the EU launched Global Strategy *Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe* to replace the ESS—note that the 'better world' of the ESS has been abandoned. The document reveals a more exclusive, patriarchal and Othering foreign policy than that envisaged in 2003, focusing far more on hard security to protect (explicitly) EU citizens, particularly from terrorism within the Union, and especially from dangers emanating from Europe's (Southern) neighbourhood and to support the EU "defence community" (read: arms trade). The primary priorities of EU foreign policy are now the intertwined policy areas of preventing or countering violent extremism, counter-terrorism and stemming forced migration into the EU. The first challenge for the EU's commitments to WPS beyond its borders, therefore, is that this policy area sits within a highly gendered foreign policy context that is increasingly securitized and Othering.

In its final version, the EU Global Strategy includes several brief references to both "gender" and "women." (Earlier versions reportedly did not include any references to either.) It acknowledges, the "multiple dimensions [of conflicts]—from security to gender, from governance to the economy", without defining what a gender (of any other) dimension to conflict might be, other than different from security, governance and the economy (European Union External Action Service 2016, 28). The EU will develop more "creative approaches to diplomacy", which will include "promoting the role of women in peace efforts—from implementing the UNSC Resolution [sic] on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU's internal gender balance" (31) and commits to "systematically mainstream human rights and gender issues across policy sectors and institutions" (51).

The references to 'women' are illuminating: "thousands of men and women serving under the European flag for peace and security" (4) in civilian and military Common Security and Defence Policy missions around the world. European women here are active, if subordinated to male colleagues, in masculine hard-security roles. The participation of (European) women in foreign policy making is to be strengthened (48). Other women in the EU Global Strategy are passive recipients of aid—lumped together with 'youth' : "[we] will champion decent work opportunities, notably for women and youth" (26) and "children": "We will significantly step up our humanitarian efforts in these countries [of origin and transit of migrants and refugees], focusing on education, women and children" (27). Other young people—whether youth or children—are ungendered, passive recipients; Other women are infantilised. Men are not mentioned. Women are Othered; the (potential) agency of European women is partially recognised within a masculinized security apparatus, but Other women are infantilised passive recipients of European largesse.

It matters that the EU Global Strategy is so patriarchal and Othering because although there is debate as to whether the EU Global Strategy is a strategy, it is at least a statement of ambition. This then is the political climate in which specific policies, including the WPS agenda, are supposed to be implemented. The EU adopted its *Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security* (henceforth: Comprehensive Approach to 1325) in 2008 (Council of the EU 2008), intended as the equivalent of a National Action Plan, the tool through which states implement

their commitment to UNSCR 1325. The first paragraph raises women's experience of sexual violence in conflict, before noting that

> Women are however not only victims of war and violence. They also play active roles as combatants, peace builders, politicians and activists. The equal participation of men and women in these roles is both an essential goal and means to help prevent and resolve conflicts and promote a culture of inclusive and sustainable peace (2).

The Comprehensive Approach to 1325 is a detailed document, laying out how the WPS agenda should be integrated into all areas of external action. It includes benchmarks, and the third report on implementing the Comprehensive Approach to 1325 is being drafted at the time of writing. The second implementation report noted several achievements during the reporting period (October 2010 to December 2012), most of which related to improving the EU's internal gender balance, such as the nomination of gender focal points in Delegations, the provision of training, and the number of National Action Plans adopted by Member States. It also identified significant challenges, including in the reporting rate from Member States, evaluating the impact of WPS tools, systematically including gender and WPS across Common Security and Defence Policy missions, and ensuring more EU women participate in UN peacekeeping missions (Council of the EU 2014, 4).

A separate document, the Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 was adopted in 2015 to measure how the EU delivers on four pivotal areas:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the social and economic rights/empowerment of women and girls
- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation and
- Shifting the Institutional Culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments (Council of the EU 2015).

The Gender Action Plan and the Comprehensive Approach to 1325 are accompanied by detailed indicators for each area to measure progress. There seems to be institutional tension between the Gender Action Plan, which is located in the Directorate-General for Development of the European Commission, and the Comprehensive Approach to 1325, which sits in the EEAS, but each policy is robust in its own terms.

Review of the current dominant policy areas, however, do not suggest that the WPS agenda, has been meaningfully integrated beyond these specific policies. The Counter Terrorism Strategy (Council of the EU 2005) is completely gender blind. In some cases, brief references to 'women' may suggest an entry point for the WPS agenda. But despite the efforts of gender champions within institutions over the years, the lack of progress in addressing gender throughout 'other' policy areas suggests this approach should be addressed more critically. The more recent European Commission *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism*, for example, identifies empowering women as a means to tackle the underlying factors of radicalisation, and women (and very young people) as a new audience for "violence-inciting" ideologies (European Commission 2016,

3). Gender, men and boys are not mentioned. 'Youth' does appear quite frequently, and although the term is not unpacked, we might assume that 'youth' in these instances is intended to mean young men, particularly (within the EU) those from immigrant (North African) backgrounds.

We have already seen how the EU Global Strategy assigns agency to European women and passivity to Other women. The consistent absence of men and boys from policy documents is troubling, especially given the prevalence of references to sexual violence. Women and girls are identified as the primary—or only—victims of sexual and gender-based violence and this becomes the dominant 'women's issue'. The dangers, from a feminist perspective, of victim subject politics are well-known: they perpetuates racist and colonial images of the weak, constrained, and vulnerable—and, in this case, sexualised—Other women, deny their agency, and feed conservative and protectionist rather than liberating responses (Kapur 2002). The positioning of Other women and girls as primarily victims of sexual violence surely exacerbates this risk.

Women and girls are victims of sexual violence, and it is their protection and assistance *after* sexual violence that is the focus of these policies—women's and girls' experience of other human rights violations are largely overlooked, as are their experiences of other forms of gender-based violence, especially economic violence. This partial perception of how women and girls experience human rights violations is compounded by the invisibility of the men and boys who are also victims of sexual violence. Sexual violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women, girls, boys and men. Yet the policy focus is on treating female victims of sexual violence rather than on prevention, which would necessitate addressing the power imbalance in gender relations and the masculinities that produce the enabling environment for sexual and gender-based violence.

The Treaty states that "equality between women and men" is a founding value of the EU. (European Union 2012, Art. 2). This is often reprised in policy documents, although interestingly with the word order and therefore emphasis changed—it is 'equality between men and women" in the Communication on preventing radicalisation (European Commission 2016, 11). This binary representation of gender, and of women and men is highly exclusionary. It excludes people with non-binary gender identities, and the positioning of women and men suggests and reinforces heterosexual hegemony. Equality between women and men—as stated in the Treaty of the European Union—suggests and therefore reinforces binary, heteronormative and masculine-dominated identity, compounded when men are absent from policy documents as this Others and subordinates women. Gender fluidity (for example, when a person does not identify as either a man or as a woman), and plural gender identities are excluded. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation (Article 21), yet reinforces a binary understanding of gender, especially when read in conjunction with Article 23 "Equality between women and men: Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas… The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of *the under-represented sex"* (European Union

2012, emphasis added).[2] The EU has recently adopted guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Intersex Persons (Council of the EU 2013), which challenge the assumptions underpinning the EU's WPS agenda, and the EU's understanding of gender more broadly. The challenge—as with any human rights provision—will be to what extent these guidelines, which are, after all, only guidelines—will be used at all. It is surely too much to hope that they could act as a vehicle for fundamental shift in understanding of gender away from the heteronormative hegemony, towards a more inclusive and diverse understanding of gender—surely a prerequisite for equality internally and externally to the EU.

This brief review demonstrates that EU policy commitments to the WPS agenda have not translated into political commitment to consider, let alone integrate, gender equality across external policy areas. The Comprehensive Approach to 1325 and the Gender Action Plan are detailed documents accompanied by indicators and benchmarks. Reporting against these benchmarks is not seen as obligatory. These efforts are laudable, and address the technical aspects of WPS. Addressing gendered and Othered power relations within major policy areas both internally and externally are sidestepped, while the overall foreign policy agenda becomes increasingly Othering and hard-security driven.

Women, Peace and Security in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

This section[3] considers how a conflict-affected country, the DRC, has sought to implement its commitment to the same agenda, with the help, encouragement and perhaps insistence of external actors, including the EU and some of its Member States. To do so, I examine the WPS-related policies and situate these within a broader feminist political economy analysis of Congolese legislation and social norms regarding women's participation in public life. Note that this section focuses only on women and not on more inclusive understandings of gender as homosexuality is illegal in DRC and at the time when the field research that informed this section was carried out (2014), there was considerable pressure on LGBTI + individuals and activists.

In 2010, the DRC's Ministry of Gender, the Family and the Child (MGFE) published the *Action Plan of the Democratic Republic of Congo for applying UN Security Council Resolution 1325* (hereafter, National Action Plan, or NAP) (Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfant 2010). This followed a *National Gender Policy, a National Strategy against Gender-based Violence* (NSGBV) (Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfant 2009a), and an *Action Plan for*

[2] For discussion of how the term 'gender' has become "defanged" to exclude power dynamics and limited only to the gender identities of heterosexual men and women in UN circles see Charlesworth (2005, 17).

[3] This section draws on Davis (2017).

the National Strategy for fighting Gender-based Violence (Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l'Enfant 2009b) both produced by the MFGE in 2009. The NAP was therefore the third policy document in this field to be launched by MFGE within 2 years. All three were produced with the financial and technical support of international donors, including the EU.

The NAP notes that the DRC has been affected by some of the bloodiest wars in the history of the Great Lakes region. It discusses the role of women in peacemaking, and it refers to the need for the DRC to realise a constitutional commitment to male/female parity in all public institutions (Democratic Republic of Congo 2006, Art. 14) and to improve women's levels of participation in public life.

The emphasis of the document is on women as sexualised victims of regional conflict, which implicitly restricts the reach of the NAP to the east of the country. It also conforms with a broader government narrative that acknowledges social norms as restricting women's social and political rights yet places particular emphasis and responsibility on the role of 'foreign agents' in the east and their use of systematic, mass rape as a weapon of war. 'Gender' is therefore conflated with a highly patriarchal understanding of sexual violence that is only against women and girls and specifically in relation to the conflicts in the east. Sexual violence in that region is perpetrated by civilians as well as by members of the security forces and armed groups (Sonke Gender Justice Network 2012, 8)—the vast majority of whom are not 'foreign agents' but members of the national security forces. These forces remain unreformed and largely immune from prosecution, even for the most serious crimes, including widespread and possibly systematic rape and sexual violence. In shifting the blame for sexual violence to 'foreign agents' over which it has no control, the narrative in the NAP not only underplays the abusive nature of the security forces, but also obfuscates the government's responsibility for the agents under its control. It also feeds the troubling distinction between rape as a weapon of war and other forms of sexual violence in national and international courtrooms, and in discourse (Grewal 2015; Baaz and Stern 2013). Even if 'women's issues' in the DRC are seen solely through a sexual violence lens, it is clear that this is by no means limited to eastern conflict zones, as the government's own statistics indicate (Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfant 2013, 21).

The NAP proposes institutional arrangements at national and provincial levels to meet its objectives but does not identify specific actions, lead organisations, or a budget. The MFGE, the originating authority for the NAP, is the focal point for national and international donors, agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It lacks the capacity to implement its mandate (Delegation of the EU 2013) and operates, in essence, as a vehicle for donor assistance (Davis et al. 2014). It lacks the power to convene decision-makers and resources, including those from other ministries, and therefore to implement the NAP. The MFGE, then, simply does not have the resources, including decision-making authority or power within and across national government, to meet the commitments made in the NAP.

Provincial government should implement the NAP at its level is similarly incapable for although UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan are well-known in South Kivu, presumably because of the high levels of donor and NGO activity in

the province, in other parts of the country, such as in Equateur, local authorities are often unaware of UNSCR 1325 or the National Action Plan (Davis et al. 2014).

Women's Participation in Public Life

The commitments made in the NAP have to be situated in a political and legislative environment that is hardly conducive to women's increased participation in public life, let alone equality. Although the DRC's 2006 Constitution speaks specifically to women's rights in articles 5, 14, and 15, the Family Code of 1987 has presented a longstanding barrier to meaningful progress in terms of women's physical and sexual autonomy and participation in public life, and criminalises any relationship not conforming to the heteronormativity. The Family Code is firmly established in law and in the public mind. It enshrines the physical, sexual, material, and intellectual subjugation of a woman to her husband, and of women and girls to their male relatives more generally. A revised version of the Family Code was agreed in parliament in June 2016, and although the reformed text claims to remove some of the legal barriers to women's participation in public life, such as the requirement for married women to have their husband's consent to initiate legal proceedings, the pernicious article 444 still identifies the husband as the 'chef de ménage' or head of household. This clause is regularly used to excuse a wide range of restrictions on women—barring their movement, access to capital, credit, bank accounts and property. Article 359, which denies the notion of rape within marriage, remains unreformed (DRC 2016).

Other recent laws such as the parity law of 2015 and the revised electoral law of 2015 also indicate a deteriorating legal framework for women's rights and participation in public life. Women's associations championed a parity law since before 2006 in order to realise Article 14 of the Constitution, which obliges the authorities to end all forms of discrimination against women, to protect and promote women's rights, and to take "all appropriate measures to ensure the total development of and the full participation of women in the development of the nation"; it also guarantees gender parity in public institutions (Democratic Republic of Congo 2006). After an earlier bill was ruled unconstitutional for including 30% quotas intended to bring about parity progressively, a much weaker version of the bill was passed into law in 2015. It states only that "women will be represented in an equitable manner" in all nominated and elected posts in national, provincial, and local institutions" (DRC 2015b).

The revised electoral law of 2015 quietly dropped any reference to gender inclusion let alone parity, and focused all its attention on the controversial electoral calendar for elections that should have been held in 2016 (DRC 2015a). The revised law does not address the significant obstacles to women's participation identified during the 2006 and 2011 elections. Rather, it strengthens them and introduces new obstacles such as increasing the financial deposits and educational qualifications required of candidates.

If we consider these provisions against women's performance in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2006 and 2011, the prognosis does not look good. In the 2011 legislative elections, 12% of the candidates were women, down from 13.6%

in 2006 (The Carter Center 2006, 2011). Only 9% of deputies and 6% of senators in the current parliament are women, although this does represent a marginal increase on the 8% of deputies who were women in the 2006–2011 parliament (The Carter Center 2006). Women hold seven of the 48 posts in the Matata II government and have never held one of the 'sovereign ministries'—the Prime Minister and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. In the provinces before reorganisation in 2015, there were no women governors and the percentage of women deputies varied from 17% in Bas-Congo to zero in Maniema (Observatoire de la Parité 2017). Women's participation in public life in the DRC seems more limited now than it was when the DRC's first democratic elections were held in 2006, despite the visibility and vibrancy of women's civil society associations.

Women and Peace Processes

UNSCR 1325 addresses the question of participation in peace processes explicitly, as does the NAP. Women had a strong presence at the Sun City peace process that led to the Global Accord of 2002 and the formal end of wars in the region. Women's involvement there, and in the numerous peace processes that have been undertaken since then, has followed similar patterns. Women have participated to a certain degree in large-scale peace conferences like Sun City, and that held in Goma in 2008, but they have been largely excluded from lower profile events. Where women have participated in peace conferences, or where they have on rare occasions been consulted by mediators, their participation has been limited to a strictly controlled range of subjects—usually rape and sexual violence—even though women are expert in a whole range of security-related issues. It is clearly important for peace processes to raise and address sexual violence but the issue is not the sole preserve of women. There is far less attention given to addressing the causes of and preventing sexual violence than to caring for survivors. The limiting of women's participation to these subjects has effectively silenced them on other matters. Women's insights are further restricted because women are repeatedly encouraged to speak with "one voice" as if "women" constitute a homogenous group with a single, shared opinion.

The superficial nature of the consultation that has taken place is illustrated by the most recent peace agreement, the Framework Agreement for the Great Lakes region, agreed at Addis Ababa in 2013. This agreement mentions sexual violence, but it makes no reference to women's other protection needs and does not include any measures to involve women in its implementation. The UN Special Envoy Mary Robinson was the only woman to participate in the talks between the M23 and the Congolese government in Kampala that led to the agreement. Women's associations have also repeatedly noted that consultation with mediators tends to be superficial, limited to pre-determined 'women's issues', and conducted with insufficient time allowed for issues to be discussed in depth (Davis et al. 2014).

Conclusions

Reflections on these two very different situations that demonstrate significant similarities. In both cases, political economy analysis of the wider policy and legislative context shows that the WPS agenda is situated within highly masculinised, patriarchal, heteronormative environments, and is isolated from and does not influence policy or legislation beyond the narrow parameters of WPS policy. The WPS agenda does not identify, address or challenge the fundamental (gendered) power dynamics at play in the political economy, whether this is through the EU Global Strategy or the DRC's legislative framework. Neither the DRC's National Action Plan nor the Comprehensive Approach to 1325 is accompanied by a feminist political economy analysis of the policy environment in which they are situated. Without this analysis, the WPS agenda is unanchored, and is adrift in the broader and more powerful policy context.

Both cases demonstrate the importance of a political economy analysis of the bodies intended to implement mainstreaming policies. Without this, WPS or gender equality policies cannot tackle intra-institutional resistance to the WPS agenda or adequately identify the limitations caused by lack of political and financial resources and other constraints to the Ministry of Gender, the Family and the Child in DRC or the divisions tasked with implementing WPS within the EU bodies. Analysis of the resources—in terms of expertise, personnel, budget, and crucially decision-making authority—available to these bodies is necessary for them to be able to make realistic plans for mainstreaming the WPS agenda beyond specifically WPS policies. The importance of context is a mantra in foreign policy, yet these policies are supposed to be successfully implemented without the necessary analysis—i.e. a feminist political economy analysis of the power relations at play—of their contexts. Champions of the WPS and wider equality agendas are prevented from engaging with a context that, unanalysed, may be assumed to be neutral, but rather is highly resistant. Bodies are tasked with implementing the agenda, but without assessing what resources they need to do so and then allocating them. This absence cannot be accidental, but a specific flaw built into WPS policy to render it powerless beyond its own specific policy area, while small improvements—such as the existence of a policy—can be highlighted as progress.

The context analysis presented in the DRC NAP places the plan firmly within the government's over-arching political narrative about the conflicts in the region and the situation of women and girls in the DRC, as victims of sexual violence perpetrated by foreign fighters in the conflict zones of the east. This analysis has gone unchallenged—perhaps because the stereotype of 'woman as peacebuilder' makes critical engagements with analyses presented by women difficult. The EU Global Strategy, as we have seen, allows some agency for European women engaged in a masculinized, Othering foreign policy, but understands Other women to be passive and infantilized. Men and boys are invisible.

Both the EU and DRC formulations on the agenda present gender as binary, and men and boys are absent. This has two consequences, which are potentially

catastrophic for equality. The binary representation of gender, and of women and men excludes people with non-binary gender identities, and suggests and reinforces masculinized heteronormative hegemony: gender fluidity, or multiple gender identities are excluded.

Second, the absence of men and boys not only Others all women but also absolves men and boys—and therefore society at large—of any responsibility for addressing so-called 'women's issues'. Women's participation in peace processes, public life and democratic processes are constrained by social norms, which are upheld by men, women, boys and girls in a society. It is not the responsibility of women to free themselves of the impediments imposed on them by society—it is the responsibility of society as a whole including the responsibility of the men who hold power to change social norms and practices to enable women's physical, sexual, political and economic emancipation.

The absence of critical analysis of NAPs and the social and political assumptions they contain risk empowering certain groups of women—usually urban, elite and (comparatively) wealthy—at the expense of less privileged women, often rural, poor and uneducated. NAPs and the WPS agenda provide a necessary platform for women's associations, but are too often restricted to so-called 'women's issues', limiting women's engagement on other women's issues, such as security and the economy. 'Women' are expected to speak with one voice as a homogenous group—there is no space in 'consultations' for dissent or multiple perspectives. There is also a risk that the platform for women's associations enables little to no women's participation in 'mainstream' civil society, which dominates the 'non-WPS' space. Donors and other external actors should establish clear strategies to mitigate these risks.

The WPS agenda has to date provided an important policy space for raising the issue of women's participation and a platform for women's voices. However, it has remained a largely technical and therefore marginal issue that cannot make great progress because it floats unanchored to the context in which it operates. Gender equality in any meaningful sense must understand equality as between all women, all men, all girls, all boys, especially those who do not conform to dominant social norms, or who are from disadvantaged economic, social, religious or ethnic groups. The WPS agenda needs to be grounded in a feminist analysis of the political, social and legislative context in which it must operate and must target transforming the specific gender (power) relations within societies that prevent equality and emancipation. In 2011, Maria Stern hoped that recognizing the ghostly distinctions between 'good and evil, humanity and barbarism, the underdeveloped and the developed [that] haunt the secure Europe and the better World promised in the Strategy' would disarm them (Stern 2011, 50). A feminist analysis of EU foreign policy could identify and name those ghosts, and help supporters of gender equality design strategies to overcome resistance and contribute to sustainable peace through overturning the power relations that underpin the structural violence against women, sexual and gender minorities.

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