ALIGNING PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION IN THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Catherine Turner (iD) and Aisling Swaine* (iD)

Abstract This article presents the first feminist doctrinal textual analysis of cross-pillar synergies within thematic resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. Specifically, it examines the pillars relating to 'participation' and 'protection' under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. In attempts to balance agency with victimhood, normative advancement of both pillars has until recently evolved along parallel tracks, with little acknowledgment of how protection relates to women's participation. This article identifies synergies, gaps and productive tensions as the WPS agenda begins to engage with the inter-relationship between the pillars. It outlines critical implications and considerations for any future moves towards cross-pillar congruence.

Keywords: public international law, gender, participation, protection, thematic resolutions, United Nations Security Council, Women, Peace and Security agenda.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's participation, or the idea that women should be equally, or at least partially, represented in mechanisms established to advance global peace and security, is a core pillar of the United Nations (UN) Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. As a policy goal, 'women's participation' has achieved significant normative clout since the turn of the century, particularly in the context of peace processes. Driven in the main by the WPS resolutions, the idea of women's participation is not just promoted, but at times celebrated internationally by governments, non-governmental organisations and the media. In many contexts, this has led to an environment where women have been targeted for their participation, and for their engagement with the agenda.[1] This became evident with the targeting of women who participated as civil society briefers within the Security Council's own debates and had to be addressed through its Arria Formula mechanism in

* Associate Professor of Law, Durham University, Durham, UK, Catherine.turner@durham.ac.uk; Professor of Gender Studies, University College Dublin, Dublin, Republic of Ireland, A.swaine@ucd.ie.
[1] M Holmes, *Protecting Women Peacebuilders: The Frontlines of Sustainable Peace* (International Civil Society Action Network, Women's Alliance for Security Leadership, and London School of Economics Centre for Women Peace and Security 2020).

February 2022.[2] That example is only a snapshot of a broader problem. In many settings globally, women are encouraged to 'participate' under the WPS agenda, resulting in significant risks. Surprisingly little consideration has been given to how the global political push for participation may be accompanied by exposure to danger.[3]

While women's participation is, and remains, a significant normative concern, the concomitant protection risks that arise for women because of the hypervisibility of their public roles is an area in need of urgent attention. The rapidly deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan in August 2021, for example, starkly exposed the degree to which existing threats and risks faced by women in public roles can become acute and life threatening, requiring a securitised response to ensure their safety.[4] One particular tension brought into sharp relief by those events is the separation within the WPS agenda of the normative advancement of women's participation on one hand, and their protection from related threats and risks on the other. Women's participation seeks to promote women's agency as leaders in the field of peace and security. This stands in contrast to protection, which has tended to cast women as victims in need of protection, particularly from sexual violence. What has been less apparent until relatively recently is any effort to understand how the push for women's participation may also give rise to a need for their protection as a result. The situation in Afghanistan revealed the limitations of an approach that treats women's participation and their protection as separate spheres of norms, rights entitlements and policy intervention. It raises critical questions about whether and how the inter-relationship between the two is, or should be, better accommodated within the framework of WPS.

The high profile and apparent failure of the WPS agenda in Afghanistan and elsewhere has led some to question its very utility. Its rootedness in militarisation raises significant concerns regarding its potential to advance an inclusive peace, while its failure to deliver meaningful practical and political improvements in the lives of women living in armed conflict settings is heavily criticised.[5] This is all despite the efforts of the UN system and its partners to advance the implementation of the agenda.

---

[2] UN Security Council, 'Arria-Formula Meeting on Reprisals against Women Human Rights Defenders and Women Peacebuilders' (20 February 2020). An Arria-Formula meeting is an informal meeting of the Security Council, convened by a Member State(s), that allows for briefing on an important issue of peace and security.

[3] See C Turner and A Swaine, *At the Nexus of Participation and Protection: Protection Related Barriers to Women's Participation in Northern Ireland* (International Peace Institute 2021); Holmes (n 1).

[4] UN Security Council (UNSC), 'Women and Peace and Security, Report of the Secretary-General' (27 September 2021) UN Doc S/2021/1827.

[5] R Kapur, *Gender, Alterity, and Human Rights* (Edward Elgar 2020). See generally: S Basu, P Kirby and LJ Shepherd (eds), *New Directions In Women, Peace And Security* (Bristol University Press 2020); D Otto, 'A Sign of "Weakness"? Disrupting Gender Certainties in the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325' (2006) 13 MichJGender&L 113.

These are not new critiques; rather, they are given fresh impetus by recent events. The UN Security Council (UNSC) has in recent times suffered a resurgent legitimacy crisis, particularly since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Further, there is a broader emergent crisis of gendered harm deliberately designed to undermine women in leadership in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, despite the rhetoric of participation.[6] Unless this is addressed, further attempts to advance women's participation through peace and security may suffer from their own legitimacy crisis. Broadly, the failure of the UNSC to make meaningful progress in implementing the agenda, and its reductive approach to both participation and protection, raises serious questions about the extent to which it is an appropriate forum for the pursuit of women's rights and gender equality.[7] While these are valid questions, the UNSC remains a site of, and basis for, significant inter-State engagement.[8] Its specific mandate and decision-making reach mean that it is the foremost body through which women's rights can be practically advanced across multiple areas of global peace and security intervention.[9] There remain persuasive reasons not to discount the UNSC altogether, but rather to ask how it might better address the tensions that arise from its current approaches. Specifically, analysis is needed of how the UNSC might better recognise, and advance, the participation and protection elements of the WPS agenda in a more integrated fashion.

Based on that premise, this article's central contribution is to establish and present feminist doctrinal examination and critique of cross-pillar synergies within thematic resolutions of the UNSC. Specifically, by focusing on thematic interlinkages within the ten WPS resolutions, the article presents the first textual analysis of the normative relationship between the participation and protection pillars of this agenda. The article explores whether the WPS resolutions have addressed the inter-relationship between participation and protection to date, and on the basis of the findings, what implications arise from this, and whether the UNSC may attempt to address protection concurrently within its promotion of women's participation. Examining these two pillars in relation to one another reveals much about the agenda itself,

---

[6] UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), 'Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Human Rights Defenders, Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Hina Jilani' (13 December 2004) UN Doc E/CN.4/2005/101; UNHRC, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Margaret Sekaggya' (20 December 2010) UN Doc A/HRC/16/44; UNHRC, 'Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders' (10 January 2019) UN Doc A/HRC/40/60.

[7] N Puechguirbal, 'Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents' (2010) 17 IntlPeacekeeping 172.

[8] L Olsson, 'Should We Abandon the UN Security Council as an Anchor for Women, Peace and Security? Personal Reflections from New York' (*PRIO Blogs*, 21 June 2022) <https://blogs.prio.org/2022/06/should-we-abandon-the-un-security-council-as-an-anchor-for-women-peace-and-security-personal-reflections-from-new-york/>.

[9] C O'Rourke and A Swaine, 'CEDAW and the Security Council: Enhancing Women's Rights in Conflict' (2018) 67 ICLQ 167.

including its potential to maximise synergies, while avoiding pitfalls that may occur in future cross-pillar engagement. The article first locates its doctrinal inquiry within an analysis of the trajectory of the WPS agenda in the UNSC; and then within the feminist tradition of scholarly critique of the resolutions. On the basis of a textual analysis explained further below, it offers a number of thematic observations on how participation, protection and their inter-relationship appear in the WPS resolutions. This is followed by a discussion of key considerations that the UNSC should take account of when addressing cross-pillar synergies in the agenda. The article concludes by outlining the potential for future synergies within UNSC resolutions more broadly, and in the WPS agenda specifically.

II. LOCATING WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE UNSC

This article presents a feminist doctrinal analysis of the WPS resolutions both to assess and to critique the possibility for future action on cross-pillar synergies within that agenda. This section outlines the legal and normative trajectory of the resolutions. It outlines the significance of dividing their provisions into further areas of thematic concern, ie pillars, and presents the rationale for feminist analysis of the pillars of participation and protection within the agenda.

A. Norm Development through UNSC Resolutions

UNSCR 1325 in 2000 and the nine subsequent WPS resolutions established a role for the UNSC in advancing women's rights in conflict.[10] Initial feminist engagement with the Security Council was prompted not only by an interest in its mandate in advancing decision-making in global peace and security processes, but also by the 'legitimacy' that this body might lend to feminist aims.[11] While valid critiques question the UNSC as the appropriate forum for norm setting on women's rights, as noted above,[12] it is important also to recognise its significance. Despite its imperfections, the UNSC, through the WPS resolutions, has driven significant multilateral, UN system and Member State activity with regards to women's rights in conflict.[13] The resolutions have established a compelling legal and political framework prompting global engagement with gender, peace and security. Rightly or wrongly, the UNSC is the dominant voice in international efforts to advance those issues.

---

[10] ibid.
[11] D Otto, 'The Security Council's Alliance of Gender Legitimacy: The Symbolic Capital of Resolution 1325' in H Charlesworth and J-M Coicaud (eds), *Fault Lines of International Legitimacy* (CUP and United Nations University 2010).   [12] Otto (n 5).
[13] SK Werner and EB Stavrevska, *Where are the Words? The Disappearance of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Language of Country-Specific UN Security Council Resolutions* (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security 2020) <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report-WILPF-LSE_Web.pdf>; O'Rourke and Swaine (n 9).

The resolutions began, and remain, as the fulcrum of a significant 'policy ecosystem'[14] that has evolved from them.

While there has been significant debate about the legal standing of the WPS resolutions in international law,[15] it is by now clear that at least some aspects of the agenda have gained normative traction. The resolutions themselves, adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, address the situation of women in armed conflict.[16] As such, they are often considered not to have binding legal effect, and, consequently, to be subordinate to other political priorities.[17] However, more than 20 years have now elapsed since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, and it is no longer possible to argue that the resolutions have no normative effect. Indeed, their influence globally flows from their origin in the UNSC and the ways that law is developed by and within that forum.[18]

This is evident, first, for specific cases, where, acting pursuant to its international peace and security function, the UNSC has mandated action on WPS through other resolutions and agenda items.[19] Secondly, it is evident in general terms in the way that the UNSC encourages States to implement the WPS resolutions (eg through operative provisions of later WPS resolutions),[20] as well as the acceptance over time of the implementation requirements of the agenda by Member States (eg by the adoption of national action plans on WPS).[21] As Chinkin notes, 'no other thematic agendas of the Security Council have been so consistently returned to and reinforced', with later resolutions confirming commitment to the 'continuing and full implementation' of earlier resolutions.[22] The extent of this reinforcement has led Chinkin to conclude that while the WPS resolutions themselves may not enjoy binding legal status, some elements of the agenda have achieved the status of customary international law by virtue of the extent of State practice and *opinio juris*. Of particular note is the acceptance of a prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex, promotion of equality in international law, and the prohibition of gender-based and sexual violence against women.[23]

---

[14] P Kirby and L Shepherd, 'Women, Peace, and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem' (2020) 6 *JGlobalSecStud* 1.

[15] J True, 'Explaining the Global Diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda' (2016) 37(3) IPSR 307; TL Tyrggestad, 'Trick or Treat? The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security' (2009) 15 GlobGov 539; C Chinkin, *Women, Peace and Security and International Law* (CUP 2022).   [16] Chinkin, ibid, 43.

[17] ibid 45.

[18] M Wood, *The UN Security Council and International Law* (CUP 2022) 182.

[19] See, for example, inclusion of implementation of the WPS agenda in the mission mandate renewal resolution for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (UNSC Res 2543 (2020) (15 September 2020) UN Doc S/RES/2543 (2020)) and for the renewal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (UNSC Res 2480 (2019) (28 June 2019) UN Doc S/RES/2480 (2019)).   [20] O'Rourke and Swaine (n 9).

[21] To the date of publication, 104 UN Members States (54 per cent) have adopted national action plans. See the Peace Women website for the full list of plans: '1325 National Action Plans: WILPF Monitoring and Analysis of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security' <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/>.   [22] Chinkin (n 15) 56.   [23] ibid 66–7.

In this regard, the UNSC can be seen as a site of discursive power. It is simultaneously shaped by and shapes global understandings of security and how it is pursued.[24] Global events influence how resolutions are both framed by the UNSC and received by its audience of States. As a result, resolutions themselves 'constitute particular horizons of possibility'[25] when it comes to advancing the WPS agenda. Shepherd has highlighted how in 1999, prior to the adoption of UNSCR 1325, amidst a period of significant political upheaval and change globally, the UNSC was open to the idea of human security as a new lens through which to frame its work. In 2022 the world entered a period of political upheaval not seen since 2000. If the UNSC is a site of discursive power whose priorities will shape the future of the WPS agenda for better or worse, it is important to consider how the agenda could evolve in this changed global landscape. In particular, if the original feminist aim of gendered peace underpinning the adoption of the WPS agenda is to continue to be pursued, then the language that is exchanged, contested, bartered and eventually agreed upon through resolutions (and also further applied through mission mandates, sanctions and broader agenda items) will continue to matter in advancing women's rights in peace and security.

B. *The Significance of the Pillar Structure*

The overarching premise of the WPS agenda, to advance gender equality across all areas of peace and security, is characterised by a meta-level set of tensions that belies any assumed congruence across the vast range of operative provisions that make up the ten resolutions. Over time, a four-part 'pillar' structure evolved in an attempt to arrange and represent its myriad provisions under a set of broader strategic and overarching priority areas. While there is some variance in how some policy actors represent the pillars, here, according with its use in the UN system, they are defined as follows: women's participation in peace and security governance; gendered approaches to the prevention of conflict; the protection of women from gender-based violence; and gender mainstreaming across relief and rehabilitation measures. The pillar structure was adopted with the intention of improving upon the fragmented way its various provisions previously had been advanced and to enhance the overall coherence of the agenda. While the pillar structure largely reflects the historical trajectory of women's rights activism,[26] it was formally adopted through the UN System-wide Action Plan on Security

---

[24] C Turner, 'International Law and the Securitisation of Peacemaking: On Chapter VII, the Security Council and the Mediation Mandate in Yemen' (2022) JC&SL https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/krac031.

[25] L Shepherd, 'Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325' (2008) 52 IntlStudQ 383, 385.

[26] See M O'Reilly, 'Where the WPS Pillars Intersect' in SE Davies and J True (eds), *Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace and Security* (OUP 2018).

Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security in 2010. It was then further consolidated through its inclusion in the Secretary-General's Report on Women and Peace and Security presented that year to the UNSC.[27] Assessed collectively through these pillars, it is evident that the ambitions of the WPS resolutions extend across the full breadth of global peace and security legal, policy and operative systems.

Within the schemata of pillars, the prevention of armed conflict and gender-responsive relief and recovery pillars have become largely overshadowed by attention to the participation and protection pillars. The latter two pillars have become the locus of much of the political rhetoric and operative activity emerging as a result of the agenda.[28] While the ten WPS resolutions are estimated to contain 2,500 specific commitments across 210 'operational paragraphs' (OPs),[29] provisions relating to participation and protection have been consistently addressed and have featured in each resolution over the agenda's 20-year-plus trajectory. They are the most visible and most readily associated concerns related to the agenda. Activity across each of the four pillars has thus been unevenly spread since the agenda's adoption. Further, limitations have characterised how these two pillars have evolved individually. For example, participation under the agenda is criticised because of the limitations that have evolved on 'who' is identified as 'participants' promoted under this agenda.[30] Reductive parameters applied to protection have also evolved, reinforcing sexualised and racialised ideas of where and how women's protection rights emerge in conflict-affected contexts.[31]

The pillars concerning women's participation and protection have become the focus of much of the agenda's evolving legal, normative and applied outputs. The agenda's founding resolution, UNSCR 1325, committed the UNSC to increase the participation of women in the 'prevention, management and resolution of conflict'.[32] The follow-up resolution, UNSCR 1820, established clear parameters for the UNSC in the protection of civilians with regard to women's rights, namely their protection from sexual violence 'when used or commissioned as a tactic of war'.[33] As participation and protection have evolved out of, and to some degree broadened from, those original foundational legal and normative precepts, critics have also identified that the WPS agenda as a result has advanced a 'dichotomy between victimhood and its imagined opposite, agency'.[34]

---

[27] UNSC, 'Women and Peace and Security, Report of the Secretary-General' (28 September 2010) UN Doc S/2010/498, paras 32–34.   [28] O'Rourke and Swaine (n 9).
[29] Werner and Stavrevska (n 13).
[30] M Martín de Almagro, 'Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class, and Women, Peace and Security' (2018) 32(4) GlobalSoc'y 395.   [31] Puechguirbal (n 7).
[32] UNSC Res 1325 (2000) (31 October 2000) UN Doc S/RES/1325 (2000) OP 1.
[33] UNSC Res 1820 (2008) (19 June 2008) UN Doc S/RES/1820 (2008) OP 1.
[34] S Cook, 'The 'Woman-in-Conflict' at the UN Security Council: A Subject of Practice' (2016) 92 IntlAff 353, 354.

There have in fact been significant efforts within the UN system to counterbalance the evolving set of ten WPS resolutions along 'agency' and 'victimhood' trajectories. As a result, it is now generally accepted that there are five 'participation' and five 'protection' resolutions—a further meta-framing subsuming the ten resolutions and their four pillars.[35] These trends have begun to prompt institutional recognition that, while both participation and protection each historically required their own substantive normative inception and expansion, continuing to treat each as separate legal concerns along parallel tracks has resulted in neglect of the normative and empirical realities of how protection risks arise directly from women's participation. The UN's Human Rights regime has, for example, as far back as 2004, 2010 and more recently in 2019, identified the risks, threats and killings of human rights defenders (HRDs) in conflict and peacebuilding settings. This has included making visible the specific gendered risks and harms that arise for women in such roles.[36] The UN Secretary-General's 2019 WPS annual report highlighted the need for protection of civic space for women's organisations, peacebuilders and HRDs. It called for attention to the rise in 'misogynistic, sexist and homophobic speech by political leaders' and for the harassment in digital spaces directed at women in public roles to be addressed.[37] The 2021 WPS report recognised the range of risks related to women's participation and called on Member States to 'take comprehensive measures to ensure women can equally and safely exercise their civil and political rights'.[38]

The development of the WPS agenda along a two-part and binarised set of participation or protection tracks alerts us to the 'metanarrative' upon which ideas of women's rights are both constructed and essentialised in this agenda.[39] To date, it has relied on and become constructed around an agent–victim binarised narrative, ie its provisions situate women either as leaders, whose agency is of instrumental use to peace and security processes, or as victims, in need of paternalist protection. This binary approach, seemingly seductive to Member States, erases recognition of the differentiated ways that diverse women may access or enjoy rights like participation. Further, it elides the role that gender norms and inequalities have in mediating the quality and safety of that participation. There is growing recognition that if the WPS agenda does not address the consequences of its development along distinctive 'tracks' and engage on the inter-relationship between its thematic pillars, then that false binary of distinctively imagined agent or victim will be

---

[35] K Engle, 'The Grip of Sexual Violence: Reading United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Human Security' in G Heathcote and D Otto (eds), *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security* (Palgrave 2014).

[36] UNHRC 2004 (n 6); UNHRC 2010 (n 6); UNHRC 2019 (n 6).

[37] UNSC, 'Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General' (9 October 2019) UN Doc S/2019/800.   [38] UNSC 2021 (n 4) para 56.

[39] R Kapur, 'The Tragedy of Victimization Rhetoric: Resurrecting the "Native" Subject in International/Post-Colonial Feminist Legal Politics' (2002) 15 HarvHumRtsJ 1, 10.

perpetuated. If not addressed, this false dichotomy will continue to stymy the potential of the agenda to bring about the kind of substantive and transformative change imagined by the promotion of women's participation under this agenda.

C. Why Participation and Protection?

Participation and protection are each, respectively, significant areas of legal and normative concern for the fulfilment of women's rights. Women's lives, however, and their experiences of conflict and peacebuilding are not lived through mutually exclusive prisms of rights entitlements, or indeed rights violations. The structuring of women's lived experience, their claims to rights entitlements and positionality with respect to risk, vulnerability and safety are mediated through intersecting systems of oppression along sexist, racist and other lines of discrimination. It is therefore not the case that the promotion of women's participation can be advanced in isolation from related concerns across the three remaining pillars of the WPS agenda, such as protection from gendered violence. It is the case, however, that while participation and protection may each have initially required their own substantive normative expansion, their continuing treatment as separate distinctive legal concerns neglects the empirical realities of how protection risks arise directly in relation to women's participation. Now that there has been (partial) success in the normative development of participation and protection, respectively, it is timely to turn to the inter-relationship that is also implied across the distinctive pillars or tracks.

The UNSC has begun to recognise this formally. Its two most recent WPS resolutions have engaged on the relationship between women's participation and related protection concerns. For example, UNSCR 2467, the ninth WPS resolution adopted in 2019 (ostensibly a 'protection' resolution), states that 'women's protection and participation are inextricably linked and mutually-reinforcing'.[40] UNSCR 2493 adopted later that same year (in response as a counterbalancing 'participation' resolution) encourages the creation of 'safe and enabling environments' to mitigate risks to women in leadership across a range of areas.[41] An open debate dedicated to 'Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes'[42] in 2022 focused on UNSCR 2493, with the aim of encouraging States to 'gather and share recommendations' on how to prevent protection risks and promote safe and enabling environments for women's participation.[43]

---

[40] UNSC Res 2467 (2019) (23 April 2019) UN Doc S/RES/2467 (2019).
[41] UNSC Res 2493 (2019) (29 October 2019) UN Doc S/RES/2493 (2019).
[42] UNSC, 'Letter dated 10 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General' (11 January 2022) UN Doc S/2022/22.
[43] UNSC 2019 (n 41).

These are significant discursive, symbolic, political and operative moves in respect of a UNSC thematic agenda. They signal recognition of the inter-relationship between its principal areas of concern under WPS, including, arguably, the potential to be realised in applying that idea across its open debates, outcome documents, the work of committees, mission mandates and other thematic agenda items.

Since the inception of the WPS agenda feminists have identified both opportunities and pitfalls that accompany these resolutions.[44] While these recent developments are significant and positive, feminist scrutiny of moves like these by the UNSC is needed. It may not be as simple as merely connecting the two pillars of participation and protection. The key issue that is raised is this: if the UNSC is in fact to advance cross-pillar synergies within its own thematic resolutions, what might the direction of travel on those synergies offer? Given their trajectory along largely distinctive tracks to date, what risks are present in bringing together women's agency with women's victimisation? Can the binarised approach be overcome without significant costs to advancing a more fulsome understanding of the complexity of women's rights in conflict and peacebuilding? And if protection related to women's participation is advanced, would efforts become consumed by 'protecting women, rather than protecting their rights'?[45] There is a real risk that if the UNSC does engage with the inter-relationship between participation and protection, it may further entrench an essentialised 'universal subject'[46] of the 'woman in conflict'[47] trope, rather than addressing the complexity of the gendered nature of risk and harm underpinning different women's lives as they strive to lead their communities and societies in times of conflict.

Established feminist critiques can be drawn from, while specific feminist scrutiny of cross-pillar synergy can offer fresh and new considerations on, these questions. Both are advanced through this article, by building on feminist approaches and generating a new textual analysis of cross-pillar synergies in UNSC thematic resolutions. The analysis explores the implications of connections between the pillars of participation and protection for the WPS agenda as a basis for identifying what the direction of travel currently initiated in the UNSC might indeed offer.

---

[44] N Pratt, 'Reconceptualizing Gender, Reinscribing Racial–Sexual Boundaries in International Security: The Case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security"' (2013) 57 IntlStudQ 772; D Otto, 'Power And Danger: Feminist Engagement with International Law through the UN Security Council (2010) 32 AustlFemLJ 97.
[45] AM Miller, 'Sexuality, Violence Against Women, and Human Rights: Women Make Demands and Ladies Get Protection' (2004) 7(2) Health&HumRts 16.   [46] Kapur (n 39) 6.
[47] Cook (n 34).

The starting point for any exploration of the connections between pillars of thematic resolutions is the text of those resolutions themselves. Adopting a doctrinal textual approach, this article builds on the feminist tradition of engagement with the text of resolutions as a primary site of scholarly critique of norm development in the field of WPS. The following section first outlines the significance of feminist engagement with the texts of the resolutions, before then explaining the method underpinning the substantive analysis presented in this article.

A. Feminist Engagement with the WPS Resolutions

The UNSC resolutions are the 'canonical texts' of the WPS agenda,[48] and the basis from which related global and national policy making and action in the peace and security arena nominally flows. Detailed textual analysis of the resolutions provides insight not only into what has been agreed by States, but also into the 'political possibilities that are opened up, and foreclosed, in discourses of gender, peace and security'.[49] Recognition of the latter is imperative as the potential that synergies between participation and protection might provide within the texts is considered. Kirby and Shepherd note how

> Council resolutions are argued over in detail, carefully choreographed and understood to have far reaching ramifications based on the precise placement of terms, the sequencing of operative paragraphs, and the composition of the Council at the time of issuing.[50]

The language employed in the resolutions is carefully negotiated on the basis of Council convention and States' self-interest. It requires 'granular interpretation' to understand its meaning fully, as well as the implications for implementation of the resolutions.[51] Recognising this, feminists have advanced scholarly and praxis study of 'the language that is used in UN-related documents'.[52] In line with this practice, the WPS resolutions and their associated normative products, such as WPS action plans, have become the subject of a growing range of scholarly textual and content analysis research.[53]

---

[48] Kirby and Shepherd (n 14) 14. [49] ibid 3. [50] ibid 12.
[51] Werner and Straveska (n 13) 3. [52] Puechguirbal (n 7) 172.
[53] Werner and Stravrevka (n 13); A Swaine, 'Addressing the Gendered Interests of Victims/ Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Their Children Through National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security' (2020) 7 JAsianSec&IntlAff 145; Martín de Almagro (n 30); A Barrow, 'Operationalizing Security Council Resolution 1325: The Role of National Action Plans' (2016) 21 JC&SL 247; LJ Shepherd, 'Victims of Violence or Agents of Change? Representations of Women in UN Peacebuilding Discourse' (2016) 4 Peacebuilding 121; A Björkdahl and J Mannergren Selimovic, 'Translating UNSCR 1325 from the Global to the National: Protection, Representation and Participation in the National Action Plans of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda' (2015) 15 ConflictSec&Dev 311; Puechguirbal (n 7); T Haastrup and

Textual analysis has been used to critique, for example, the nature and legal status of WPS resolutions,[54] the inherently Western and racialised gaze of the agenda,[55] and the reductive framing of thematic areas of concern.[56] This critique has been crafted on the basis of careful feminist analysis of aspects of the thematic focused text of the resolutions,[57] on the specific language of that text,[58] and even on singular operative paragraphs.[59] In short, the content, nature and implications of the texts of the resolutions and their operative paragraphs particularly have been subject to significant consideration and been treated as a serious subject in a broad body of feminist scholarship.

Analysis of the text of these resolutions is recognition of the primordial place and power of language in security diplomacy, its representation of the outputs of negotiations, and ultimately what UNSC members, and the actors they nominate, can be interpreted to be committed to in respect of women's rights in conflict.[60] It is important to acknowledge here that the trajectory of women's rights in conflict does not reside solely in the UNSC or its resolutions. The WPS agenda has, however, significantly influenced and continues to shape the global policy landscape—for better or for worse— when it comes to the positioning of women's interests in peace and security. It is in this context that an analysis of the relationship between participation and protection within and across the WPS resolutions is presented.

B. Textual Analysis of Cross-Pillar Synergies

Building on the tradition of feminist engagement outlined above, for this article, the text of each of the ten WPS resolutions was examined on the basis of the following question: have the WPS resolutions addressed the relationship between participation and protection to date? The question was applied to the resolutions by first identifying language within each resolution that referenced participation, that referenced protection, or referenced them jointly in some way. Text from the resolutions was copied into a table organised around those three categorisations. The table was used to conduct a disaggregated and aggregated analysis of the text of the resolutions through the lens of the pillars and the research question. The aim was to identify not only the

---

JJ Hagen, 'Global Racial Hierarchies and the Limits of Localization via National Action Plans' in Basu, Kirby and Shepherd (n 5).   [54] True (n 15); Chinkin (n 15); Tyrggestad (n 15).

[55] Kapur (n 5); Pratt (n 44).

[56] M Jannson and M Eduards, 'The Politics of Gender in the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security' (2016) 18 IntlFemJPol 590; J Hagen, 'Queering Women, Peace and Security' (2016) 92 IntlAff 313; NF Hudson, 'Securitizing Women's Rights and Gender Equality' (2009) 8 JHumRts 53.

[57] C O'Rourke, 'Walk(ing) the Halls of Power'? Understanding Women's Participation in International Peace and Security' (2014) 15 MJIL 1; Engle (n 35).

[58] Olsson (n 8); Puechguirbal (n 7).

[59] G Heathcoate, 'Naming and Shaming: Human Rights Accountability in Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010) on Women, Peace and Security' (2012) 4 JHumRtsPrac 82.

[60] Werner and Stavrevska (n 13).

existence of pillar-specific text, but to pinpoint any inter-connections between the pillars evident in the text. This was done 'with the aim of identifying a pattern'[61] which was used to organise the analysis into themes, discussed in the next section. In that way, the textual analysis provided both a mapping of language relevant to the inquiry as well as presenting a new thematic reading of the resolutions through the lens of the two pillars, which will be presented in the following section.

<div align="center">IV. PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION IN THE WPS RESOLUTIONS</div>

Detailed textual analysis of the WPS resolutions identified two overarching thematic findings with respect to the participation and protection pillars. First, it found, evidenced and reiterated that both participation and protection appear as distinct areas of focus with their own distinct provisions, and have a predominant presence, within and across the resolutions.[62] Analysis of how each pillar appears in distinctive and parallel ways is first set out in Section A below. The textual analysis also identified three overarching thematic ways that participation and protection appear in relation to one another within the resolutions, as follows: (i) Balancing Empowerment and Victimhood; (ii) Women's Participation as a Form of Protection; and (iii) Protection Related Specifically to Women's Participation and Leadership. Each of these themes is discussed in Section B, below. The textual analysis covered both the preambular paragraphs (PP) as well as the operational paragraphs of the resolutions. Recognising that the preambular paragraphs are often regarded in international law as carrying less normative weight than operational paragraphs,[63] the analysis is centred primarily on the operational paragraphs. Nevertheless, from the analysis it is noted that in many cases more substantive aspects of the relationship between participation and protection tend to be elucidated in the preambular sections of resolutions. For this reason, preambular text features in the analysis below.

A. Parallel Concerns: Participation and Protection Within the Resolutions

Provisions on participation and protection appear alongside but separate to each other across the ten WPS resolutions. A close reading of the resolutions gives clear insight into how both participation and protection are defined for the purposes of the agenda.

---

[61] Puechguirbal (n 7) 173.
[62] For a quantitative analysis demonstrating the fact of separate presentation of the four pillars of the agenda, see Kirby and Shepherd (n 14).
[63] MC Wood 'The Interpretation of UN Security Council Resolutions' (1998) 2 MaxPlanckYrbkUNL 73.

1. Participation in the WPS resolutions

Participation has become the most readily identifiable aim of the WPS agenda. The first WPS resolution, UNSCR 1325, centres the representation of women across all aspects of conflict management, resolution and response. It establishes a clear priority for the overall agenda,[64] further advanced across the subsequent four 'participation' resolutions. While women's participation is prioritised in provisions across the WPS agenda,[65] over time, the related rhetoric, literature and policy dialogue has become increasingly associated with women's participation in peace processes.

There are three notable related trends in this regard. The first is that much activity under the resolutions is directed primarily towards participation in formal peace processes, including mediation, negotiation and post-conflict implementation. This has an impact on the nature of participation and the types of women who can be expected to participate. Operational paragraphs have focused on the ways that women can be supported to participate in these processes. This is evident in examples where mediation support actors are called on to 'facilitate women's meaningful inclusion', or provide 'financial and technical assistance to women', or provide 'support and training to mediators and technical teams on the impact of women's participation'.[66]

The second trend appears in more recent resolutions and links women's participation with leadership, framing women as leaders. Three of the five participation resolutions call on the UN Secretary-General to increase the number of women being appointed as envoys or to high-level positions in mediation teams.[67] More specifically, UNSCR 2122 draws attention to women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution.[68] The trend towards centring leadership in participation is also reflected in more recent reports on enhancing women's participation in peace processes.[69] In this way, women's participation and increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions in peace and security is estimated to contribute to overall institutional strategies to improve gender parity at the UN itself.[70]

The third trend is the growing acknowledgment of the value of the work of women's organisations and networks. The resolutions acknowledge how this work advances women's participation. UNSCR 2122, for example, calls on

---

[64] O'Rourke (n 57).   [65] ibid.

[66] UNSC Res 2242 (2015) (13 October 2015) UN Doc S/RES/2242 (2015); UNSC 2019 (n 41).

[67] UNSC Res 2122 (2013) (18 October 2013) UN Doc S/RES/2122 (2013); UNSC Res 1889 (2009) (5 October 2009) UN Doc S/RES/1889 (2009); UNSC 2000 (n 32); See also UNSC, 'Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations Activities in Support of Mediation' (27 June 2017) UN Doc A/72/115; C Turner, 'Absent or Invisible? Women Mediators and the United Nations' (2018) 9 GlobalPol 244.   [68] UNSC 2013, ibid.

[69] C Turner and C Bell, *Increasing the Representation of Women Mediators Through Collaborative Leadership Models for Enhancing Equality* (UN Women 2021).

[70] UNSC 2017 (n 67).

Member States to take 'note of the critical contributions of civil society, including women's organizations to conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding and in this regard the importance of sustained consultation and dialogue between women and international decision makers'.[71]

While there has been a tendency for participation in formal peace processes to predominate in research and policy, in the resolutions themselves, participation per se extends beyond this space. For example, UNSCR 1820, a 'protection' resolution, emphasises that participation requires women's 'equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security'.[72] This has been interpreted to, inter alia, include efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping, which recently has been reinforced by the UNSG's parity strategy and the adoption of UNSCR 2538.[73]

In addition to pillar-specific provisions, the textual analysis also reveals attention within the ten resolutions to a range of 'non-pillar' provisions[74] that advance participation across all aspects of peace and security governance and related initiatives. This extends the reach of participation beyond the headline peace processes and peacekeeping initiatives. In all, a close reading of the WPS resolutions shows that in the texts themselves, provisions for or references to women's participation appear not just in relation to peace processes, but also in respect to public life in conflict and post-conflict States. This includes, for example, women's participation in elections and formal politics, in economic decision-making, as well as in justice and security, including transitional justice. It also includes wider peacebuilding activities such as in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, the delivery of humanitarian aid and in response to violent extremism and the illicit use of arms.

Finally, the textual analysis revealed a dual concern with participation regarding both women's presence—or descriptive representation—in positions of peace and security-related decision making, as well as the inclusion of women's rights on security agendas.[75] Again, UNSCR 2122 recognises 'the continuing need to increase women's participation and the consideration of gender-related issues in all discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of armed conflict'.[76] While not explicitly linked, this text begins to hint at connections between women's participation and protection of their rights.

---

[71] UNSC 2013 (n 67) PP.   [72] UNSC 2008 (n 33) PP.
[73] UNSC Res 2538 (2020) (28 August 2020) UN Doc S/RES/2538 (2020).
[74] Kirby and Shepherd (n 14).
[75] For an overview of 'descriptive' representation, see O'Rourke (n 57).
[76] UNSC 2013 (n 67) OP 7.

2. Protection in the WPS resolutions

Protection across the ten resolutions has largely focused on violations of women's human rights and of humanitarian law by armed actors, primarily on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Through the adoption of the second WPS resolution, UNSCR 1820, the agenda took a much-needed focus on CRSV that had, up to that time, received only sporadic attention by the UNSC. This was perhaps the point of departure for the WPS agenda's expansion along two tracks, with the recognition of the systematic violation of women in armed conflict arresting the Council's attention under WPS for some time. The use of a framing that tied CRSV to 'strategic rape' meant that the resolutions focused primarily on that aspect of armed-actor-led systematic violence. Critics have pointed out that this prompted a tendency to conflate all gendered violence, and even women's experiences of conflict, with strategic rape. The resulting metanarrative came to represent the primary protection concern for women in armed conflict contexts for some time.[77]

From their inception, the opening operational paragraphs of the protection-focused resolutions established a very clear delineation of 'sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to target civilians deliberately or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations'.[78] This was carried from UNSCR 1820[79] through to UNSCR 2106 where it is defined as a crime against humanity and an element of genocide,[80] to the most recent resolution, UNSCR 2467 with a focus on armed actors and 'chains of command'.[81] From the outset, CRSV is by necessity, in respect of the UNSC's mandate, framed as an issue that can exacerbate conflict and inhibit progress in maintaining international peace and security. While representing significant progress in the recognition of CRSV as a crime, the later recognition by UNSCR 2467 that UN actors engage with armed actors 'to prevent and address all acts and forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations'[82] cannot be underestimated. The inclusion of 'all acts and forms' optimistically points to an expanded understanding of CRSV and its relevance in post-conflict situations. Here and in its preambular paragraphs, UNSCR 2467 sets out the basis for this resolution's recognition 'that the safety and empowerment of women and girls is important for their meaningful participation in peace processes'.[83]

Relatedly, the textual analysis shows that in some WPS resolutions, particularly the participation resolutions, wider gender-based violence is referenced, widening the lens somewhat on the forms of harm from which women should be protected. Protection from rights violations within

---

[77] See M Eriksson Baaz and M Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (Zed Books 2013).
[78] UNSC 2008 (n 33) OP 1.   [79] ibid.
[80] UNSC Res 2106 (2013) (24 June 2013) UN Doc S/RES/2106 (2013) OP 2.
[81] UNSC 2019 (n 40) OP 1.   [82] ibid, OP 2.   [83] ibid, PP.

particular contexts, such as in refugee and displacement sites, and in the context of DDR and cantonment sites are also specifically referenced.[84] In some cases 'security threats and protection challenges' affecting women are noted.[85] However, it is not clear if the 'security threats' include those outside of political armed violence. The link with a broader understanding of security, threat and gender-based harm for women outside of armed-actor-led violence is not always explicitly apparent within the resolutions.

In conclusion, separate provisions dealing with participation and protection appear alongside each other, and are prolific across the resolutions, signalling their primacy in respect of the agenda. These specific provisions and language represent the advancement, albeit in limited ways as discussed, of each of the pillars along specific trajectories. The volume of provisions on each also evidences the balance that has been attempted at a macro level, between resolutions that resolutely focus on participation or protection. The resolutions that are primarily focused on advancing women's participation, in many ways have had to respond to the potency that the successive protection resolutions galvanised in the mid-way point of the agenda in its first two decades. That counterbalancing has to some degree also, however, served to carve out a much-needed specificity tied to each pillar. This has, however, at least in the early resolutions, prompted an evolution of the agenda along the aforementioned binaries of agency and victimhood.

B. Inter-Connecting Concerns: Varying Associations between Participation and Protection across the WPS Resolutions

The findings of the textual analysis above offers only a partial reading of the language, substance and texture of the participation and protection pillars in the resolutions, and one which largely elides the evolution of a closer relationship between the two over time. Turning now to their potential synergies, the textual analysis demonstrates three distinct methodologies of connection. First, participation and protection are frequently paired together within the same provision where the phrasing attempts to balance the participation/empowerment and protection/victimhood binary in the WPS agenda. Second, they appear together in language focused on mechanisms of protection, whereby some women's participation is understood as a means of other women's protection. Third, and of most relevance to this article, participation and protection appear together in two ways in respect to acknowledging an inter-relationship between the pillars: in an implicit sense, whereby language could be interpreted as pointing to the link between women's safety and their participation; and an explicit sense, where a direct relationship between women's participation and their protection is made clear as a specific concern to UNSC. These are elaborated below.

---

[84] ibid.

[85] See, eg, UNSC 2013 (n 67) OP 5.

1. Balancing Empowerment and Victimhood

There are examples within the resolutions where language places participation and protection adjacent to each other within one singular provision, but they are positioned as separate concerns. For example, UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1889 recognise that '… effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their [women's] protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security'.[86] Here, women's protection is centred as a concern of a peace process, but not necessarily linked to women's ability to participate fully. However, the aim of the provision here, and similarly elsewhere, appears to be to ensure that both protection and participation, as distinctive concerns, are equally addressed within a provision related to a peace process.

There are also examples of language that cites both protection and participation together within an individual provision, but with the aim of attempting to balance the participation/empowerment and protection/victimhood binary. For example, UNSCR 1889 notes 'that women in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations continue to be often considered as victims and not as actors in addressing and resolving situations of armed conflict and *stressing* the need to focus not only on protection of women but also on their empowerment in peacebuilding.[87]

In language such as this, the concern once again is with balancing a binary, but not necessarily addressing the protection concerns relating to participation. As the agenda progresses, the specific concern with balancing agency and victimhood seems to inform attempts to ensure reference to participation in the protection resolutions, and vice versa. A critical concern is what this effort at counterbalancing portends? Is it simply recognition of the need for balance? Or does it represent a more substantive understanding that it is not just the binary that is problematic, but also the parameters of what agency and victimhood have come to mean through this agenda? Agency is not simply about participation, and protection is not only about CRSV. As States clamoured to be seen to rescue women from CRSV in the early resolutions, and as they recently clamoured to be seen to be rescuing women from Afghanistan, there is little evidence that this counterbalancing is an effort to disrupt the reductive parameters of agency and victimhood that the binary is based upon. There is little evidence of any acknowledgement that agency can be 'both a rupture in the familiar representation of women-as-victim and an additional burden for (some) women to bear'.[88] There is need for a better understanding and response to the potency of the pull of this agenda and of how empowerment and victimhood narratives have driven its notoriety and

---

[86] UNSC 2000 (n 32) PP; Similar text in UNSC 2009 (n 67) PP.
[87] UNSC 2009 (n 67) PP (emphasis in original).
[88] LJ Shepherd, 'Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond' (2011)13 IntlFemJPol 504, 510.

status. Better attention to the reproduction of political and legal meaning attributed to protection in respect to participation is needed as the agenda continues to evolve.[89] A fundamental shift in how the agenda sees and understands gender, and how it sees and understands its role in promulgating legal and political norms that reproduce gendered and racial hierarchies, as well as the binaries that mediate women's lives, remains absent from the texts.

2. Women's Participation as a Form of Protection

Participation and protection appear together in language that attempts to advance women's participation within system-wide entities and mechanisms whose function is to provide protection in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, such as policing and peacekeeping. This language is premised on the assumption that (some) women's participation within these protection mechanisms will enhance (other) women's overall protection. For example, UNSCR 1820:

> *Encourages* troop and police contributing countries … to heighten awareness and the responsiveness of their personnel participating in UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians, including women and children, and prevent sexual violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, including wherever possible the deployment of a higher percentage of women peacekeepers or police.[90]

Similarly, UNSCR 2106 'stresses women's participation as essential to any prevention and protection response'.[91]

In these examples of text, the resolutions establish a role for 'women' in their own protection. Some provisions go further, and seem to underline women's participation as a form of protection, such as UNSCR 1960 '*[w]elcoming* the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions, *recognizing* that their presence may encourage women from local communities to report acts of sexual violence'.[92]

UNSCR 2106 further '*[e]mphasizes* the important role that can be played by women, civil society, including women's organizations, and formal and informal community leaders in exerting influence over parties to armed conflict with respect to addressing sexual violence'.[93]

It is important to note that these provisions primarily refer to some women's participation as a form of protection for other women who are subject to the services provided by those entities. Women are assumed to placate the men within those institutions and services, while protecting other women, an

---

[89] Drawing from N Henry, 'The Fixation on Wartime Rape: Feminist Critique and International Criminal Law' (2014) 23(1) S&LS 93.   [90] UNSC 2008 (n 33) OP 8 (emphasis in original).

[91] UNSC 2013 (n 80) OP 1.

[92] UNSC Res 1960 (2010) (16 December 2010) UN Doc S/RES/1960 (2010) PP (emphasis in original).   [93] UNSC 2013 (n 80) OP 11 (emphasis in original).

instrumentalist approach towards using women as protection leverage.[94] This amounts to a clear strategy of the securitisation of women's participation. This approach to language in the text of the resolutions also generates hierarchies among women. Within national contexts, for example, women with required levels of education, social capital or identity-related advantages may join national security bodies in post-conflict societies and become the protectors, whereas women without those opportunities will not. Hierarchies are also created between external women coming into a national context through international protection mechanisms and national women then assumed to be subject to their 'protection'. This ignores the fact that in many instances, external women arriving into a national context through peacekeeping generates an array of hierarchies of power between women in that protection role and those subject to that protection.[95] The text is in effect a signal that some women can protect other women, fuelling the assumption and archetype of the 'purist' ideal woman who will take responsibility for ensuring other women's protection, devoid of corruption herself.

An additional assumption underlines these provisions, namely that the women providing that protection, whether in policing or peacekeeping, will not themselves need protection. According to the argument underlying this article, and as has been evidenced elsewhere, women in leadership roles in policing[96] and peacekeeping[97] are subject to intimidation, threats and sexual abuse themselves. Their experiences of risk, despite the roles they occupy in peace and security activity, exemplify the need for a broader policy framing of 'protection'. Further, the framing of 'sexual exploitation and abuse' as an issue of personnel conduct positions responsibility for it as a separate human resource issue, rather than a protection or human rights issue, removing it from the remit of 'protection' under the WPS agenda.[98] Future engagement on a participation–protection nexus should advance a much more substantive approach that recognises the full range of protection risks related to participation. This includes personnel within the UN system itself, and ultimately avoiding putting women at further risk by attributing them responsibility for their and other women's protection.

---

[94] S Karim and K Beardsley, 'Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing: Token Gestures or Informed Policymaking?' (2013) 39 IntlInteractions 461; O Simić, 'Does the Presence of Women Really Matter? Towards Combating Male Sexual Violence in Peacekeeping Operations' (2010) 17 *IntlPeacekeeping* 188.

[95] K Alexandra, 'Peacekeepers' Privilege and Sexual Abuse in Post-Conflict Populations' (2011) 23 PeaceRev 369.   [96] Turner and Swaine (n 3).

[97] BN Hernandez, 'Sexual Abuse in UN Peacekeeping: The Problem of Viewing Women as a "Quick Fix"' (*E-International Relations*, 20 February 2020) <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/20/sexual-abuse-in-un-peacekeeping-the-problem-of-viewing-women-as-a-quick-fix/>.

[98] A Nduka-Agwu, '"Doing Gender" After the War: Dealing with Gender Mainstreaming and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peace Support Operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone' (2009) 11 CivWars 179.

3. A Clear Inter-Relationship: Protection Related Specifically to Women's Participation and Leadership

The textual analysis evidenced some early engagement in the WPS resolutions with the inter-relationship between the participation and protection pillars. Attempts at addressing this inter-relationship is evident in the more recently adopted resolutions, perhaps indicative of a response to emerging evidence and trends across the human rights regime of the UN system.[99] Language and provisions in the resolutions address the relationship between participation and protection in a varied yet constructive fashion in two ways: both implicitly and explicitly.

Participation and protection appear together in language that represents a potential relationship between the two pillars in an implicit sense. Implicit means that the language, and the appearance of participation and protection concerns within the same provision and language, could be interpreted as pointing to a link between women's safety and their participation. For example, UNSCR 1888 links women's participation in peacebuilding with measures to reduce sexual violence, recognising to some degree that enduring CRSV is problematic from the perspective of women's ability to contribute to peacebuilding. It does so for example by 'noting the important role of women in rebuilding society, and *urges* the Peacebuilding Commission to encourage all parties in the countries on its agenda to incorporate and implement measures to reduce sexual violence in post-conflict strategies'.[100]

Going a step further, there are provisions in the later resolutions, such as those in UNSCR 2122, where the UNSC 'expresses its intention to include provisions to facilitate women's full participation and protection in election preparation and political processes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, security sector and judicial reforms'[101] and so on. Here, women's 'full participation and protection in' various peacebuilding mechanisms are presented together. The preamble to this resolution also lists the areas where implementation is inadequate, which sets out an implicit relationship between participation and protection rights, such as:

> protection from human rights abuses and violations; opportunities for women to exercise leadership; resources provided to address their needs and which will help them exercise their rights; and the capacities and commitment of all actors involved in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions to advance women's participation and protection.[102]

In UNSCR 2493, there are linkages made in an implicit sense, again to enable women to participate in structures of peacebuilding, as follows: 'the appointment of gender advisers and/or women protection advisers, provisions

---

[99] Chinkin (n 15) 56.
[100] UNSC Res 1888 (2009) (30 September 2009) UN Doc S/RES/1888 (2009) OP 18 (emphasis in original).   [101] UNSC 2013 (n 67) OP 4.   [102] ibid, PP.

to facilitate women's full and effective participation and protection in: the election preparation and political processes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs' and so on.[103]

The implicit relationships described above were perhaps the basis for language that has appeared more recently and is explicit, meaning that a direct relationship between women's participation and their protection is made clear and of concern to the WPS agenda. There are earlier references of this kind to acknowledge. For example, the preamble of UNSCR 1820 notes that the UNSC is:

> *Deeply concerned* also about the persistent obstacles and challenges to women's participation and full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as a result of violence, intimidation and discrimination, which erode women's capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public life, and acknowledging the negative impact this has on durable peace, security and reconciliation, including post-conflict peacebuilding.[104]

UNSCR 2122 also 'stresses' that Member States should 'ensure women's full and equal participation in all phases of electoral processes, noting that specific attention must be paid to women's safety prior to, and during, elections'.[105]

It is the two 2019 resolutions, however, that make clear that the UNSC recognises that there is an explicit relationship between promoting women's participation and addressing protection-related risks. As noted above, UNSCR 2467 addresses the link between women's participation and protection. It also notes the reverse, that women's empowerment is critical to their protection, perhaps threading through the earlier resolutions' pronouncement on women's participation in protection mechanisms as a means of protection:

> *Emphasizing* that advancing gender equality and women's political, social, and economic empowerment is critical to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and that the safety and empowerment of women and girls is important for their meaningful participation in peace processes, preventing conflicts and rebuilding societies, and that therefore women's protection and participation are inextricably linked and mutually-reinforcing as reflected by all previous resolutions on women, peace and security.[106]

It is notable that this significant statement is housed in a preambular paragraph. Often cited as the 'dumping ground'[107] for the provisions that States cannot agree on or do not want to commit themselves to fully, a shift is needed in the recognition of this 'inextricably linked'[108] relationship from the preamble to an operative provision in any future resolutions. The need for protection of

---

[103] UNSC 2019 (n 41) OP 10(b).
[104] UNSC 2008 (n 33) PP (emphasis in original).
[105] UNSC 2013 (n 67) OP 8.
[106] UNSC 2019 (n 40) PP (emphasis in original).
[107] Wood (n 63) 86.
[108] UNSC 2019 (n 40) PP.

journalists and civil society is addressed in an operative provision in that resolution.[109] A further provision reiterates that language to ensure 'women's full and effective participation and protection in' mechanisms such as elections and the security sector.[110] Finally, UNSCR 2493:

> encourages Member States to create safe and enabling environments for civil society, including formal and informal community women leaders, women peacebuilders, political actors, and those who protect and promote human rights, to carry out their work independently and without undue interference, including in situations of armed conflict, and to address threats, harassment, violence and hate speech against them.[111]

These latter developments represent a welcome move towards acknowledging the critical risks and challenges faced by women in leadership roles across conflict and post-conflict contexts. This recognition has emerged as a recent concern, despite 20 years of the WPS agenda. As noted, there has been limited and nascent examination of the inter-relationship between the two predominant pillars of the WPS agenda. The effects of the limited normative progression of each pillar has also significantly made an impact on the potential inter-relationship between them. As a fulcrum of operational activity on women's rights in conflict, there is arguably a case to be made that the UNSC, and implementing partners, deepen engagement with how women's inclusion, participation and leadership is directly affected by protection risks. Critical considerations for any movement forward in that regard are now examined.

V. BRINGING TOGETHER PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CROSS-PILLAR SYNERGIES

As the UNSC shows signs of addressing the 'inextricably linked and mutually-reinforcing'[112] relationship between participation and protection, a question arises regarding the definitional and conceptual basis of that inter-relationship. Would the bringing together of these two pillars simply represent a melding of the existing normative confines of each pillar? Or will it truly reflect an understanding of the common range, as well as context-specific gendered protection barriers experienced by women in conflict and peacebuilding settings (beyond CRSV)? And would it move beyond a material acknowledgement of 'women's experiences' of protection risks, towards the complexities that underpin the ways that gender mediates women's lives as they 'participate' in different conflict contexts?[113]

---

[109] ibid, OP 21. [110] ibid, OP 23. [111] UNSC 2019 (n 41) OP 6.
[112] UNSC 2019 (n 40) PP.
[113] Drawing from: K Lockett, 'The Mechanisms of Exclusion: Women in Conflict (2008) 16 FemLegalStud 369; Kapur (n 39).

On the basis of the textual analysis, critical observations in relation to the potential that arises to advance synergies between participation and protection are now offered. Any future cross-pillar engagement risks sustaining the aforementioned 'metanarratives',[114] or indeed prompting new narratives that are reductive, and that will serve the UNSC itself, rather than addressing the complexity of rights deficits in women's lives. The observations in this article point to the risks that arise when applying a protection lens to participation: first, that it simply emulates the securitisation that has characterised the UNSC's engagement with protection generally, and CRSV specifically; secondly, that such an approach further essentialises women, drawing away from women's agency and missing the opportunity to be transformative; and finally, that it continues to neglect the need for an ethical approach to women's rights in conflict.

A. Avoiding the Securitisation of Women's Participation

The adoption, in quick succession, of a series of 'protection' resolutions focused on CRSV at its mid-way point to date, became the lightning rod for much of the scholarly and activist critique that has been directed at the WPS agenda. The trend towards a victim narrative and a focus on CRSV in those resolutions circumscribed a restrictive boundary to the idea of protection. The narrowness of the lens on CRSV ultimately failed to provide for the threats, risks and harms that women are subject to in the broader context of conflict, peacebuilding, and, particularly, the push for their participation in public life. The initial framing of CRSV as an aberrant and exceptional event linked only to armed actors is critiqued for reinforcing false legal and conceptual dichotomies on women's experiences of violence. In particular, it was noted how this approach elides the relationship between CRSV and pre-conflict as well as co-existing gendered harms in conflict and peacebuilding.[115] It also generated a particular representation of the victim subject of that violence, that of racialised and powerless women of the Global South, as victims in need of protection, and indeed racialised tropes of the men who commit such crimes.[116] The participation resolutions have in some cases attempted to counter these reductive assumptions by offering broader language that importantly refers to 'gender-based violence' rooted in gender inequalities more broadly.[117] However, with the focus of the protection arm of WPS on a singular conception of CRSV seemingly 'well intentioned … [it] avoids consideration of other issues and … can inadvertently frustrate other goals in

---

[114] Kapur, ibid 10.
[115] A Swaine, *Conflict-related Violence Against Women: Transforming Transition* (CUP 2018); J Boesten, 'Of Exceptions and Continuities: Theory and Methodology in Research on Conflict-related Sexual Violence' (2017) 19 IntlFemJPol 506.　　　　[116] Kapur (n 39).
[117] UNSC 2015 (n 66); UNSC 2013 (n 67); UNSC 2009 (n 67).

human rights, particularly those of building enabling conditions that expand women's and men's capacities'.[118]

It is therefore important to reflect on this critique and consider the risks inherent in applying a 'protection' lens to women's participation. The advancement of women's rights broadly has, as chronicled by feminist scholars, been rife with the tensions inherent to the 'protection/freedom quandary', which in turn is 'critiqued for its neo-colonial forms, [and how] it unfolds in particularly dangerous ways in regard to women and violence'.[119] Many scholars have commented on how violence, and particularly the victimhood associated with CRSV, holds particular potency, presenting a purist victim around which to galvanise.[120] By centring on the bodies of (Global South) women, rather than on their agency, the realities of the role of global geopolitical inequalities that inform the violence are elided. It centres sexualised harm and the concerns of men in respect to women's sexual purity, rather than the rights entitlements of any or all women, and the need to tackle the structural barriers to their freedoms and choices (including whether choices about whether to participate or not). With the entry of violence against women into the Security Council, its procedural workings and negotiated language have securitised the issue itself, such as the rights entitlement to live lives free of violence. It has also securitised the idea of protection, namely that the response to this issue is a securitised response, responding to the danger to women's physical bodies, rather than fulfilling their inalienable rights. There is significant risk that any moves by the UNSC to advance normative or operational activity on the participation–protection nexus becomes a securitised approach, continuing the pattern of the securitisation of women's rights to date by the agenda.[121]

The spectre of securitisation is already emerging. At global levels thus far, policy dialogue on the participation–protection nexus has centred on women's safety. This, as discussed, is a hugely important concern. Women activists, journalists and HRDs have been assassinated in multiple countries for the roles they play. Women who have addressed the UNSC have been re-located to ensure their safety, while formal securitised response programmes that aim to ensure protection and the physical safety of women in such positions are being developed.[122] In the crisis unfolding in Afghanistan in 2021, the physical safety of women in leadership roles was, and remains, of paramount concern. In that context, there was, out of necessity, an immediate evacuation response. However, if the response to the protection of women who are playing visible roles and are in vulnerable positions as a result is a securitised one, such as through evacuation and physical protection, at what point will participation become a safe endeavour for women?

---

[118] Miller (n 45).   [119] ibid 18.   [120] Puechguirbal (n 7); Miller (n 45); Kapur (n 39).
[121] Hudson (n 56).   [122] Holmes (n 1).

In the growing acknowledgement of the need to recognise the inter-relationship between participation and protection lies a conundrum. There is an empirical reality in which women experience violence, risks, sexual harassment and practical as well as socio-cultural barriers to their freedoms. Crucially, this includes their right to participate in public and political life. The argument outlined in this article is not simply a 'symbolic exercise: there are real harms to be prevented and responded to here'.[123] The specificities of the experience of risk and the protection rights that arise require full acknowledgement as well as direct engagement. In so doing, engagement must also, however, be taken at deeper levels, beyond a securitised response to physical safety.

Addressing the ways that gendered violence, and women's freedoms, choices and participation are controlled and determined by the intersecting complexities of sexism, racism and hegemonies in geopolitics is much needed. Substantive normative and linguistic engagement with these issues must acknowledge that the system in which the participation–protection nexus is advanced is one of systemic oppression, exclusion and power inequalities. Implementing the WPS agenda in connective ways across these pillars requires a dual-pronged approach: (i) immediate securitised responses in crisis situations to ensure the safety of women, while also, importantly, (ii) accompanied by longer-term strategies that tackle the root causes and the conditions that create these levels of risk for women in the first place. This entails taking a much longer-term view of what constitutes risk and protection concerns for women, addressing them much earlier in the context of promoting their participation and viewing the WPS agenda itself, and its provisions, as longer-term commitments to fulfilling women's rights. The securitised and fetishised approach taken to protection of women from CRSV must not be repeated in the approach taken to protection related to participation.

B. Who are the 'Right Women'? Essentialism and Hierarchies in Participation

Research and practice on the participation pillar has been strongly characterised by attempts to accommodate the dual concerns of descriptive and substantive representation.[124] The weight given to instrumental accounts of the benefits of including women have given rise to tensions in respect of who is invited to participate and on what terms.

Deeper questions are prompted here. For example, how does WPS define the categories of women for whom protection is needed and why? Policy to date has coalesced around two categories of women—those of peacebuilders and HRDs. These are the 'superheroic' women who both embody and advance the ideals of the WPS agenda through their activism.[125] While these categories undoubtedly encapsulate many of the priorities and indeed risks of engagement with the WPS

---

[123] Miller (n 45).   [124] O'Rourke (n 57).   [125] Shepherd (n 88).

agenda, there is a further danger that if the participation–protection nexus centres only on these archetypes, the scope of protection will be unnecessarily limited.

Equality of participation in public life is established under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[126] and is a key premise on which UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent WPS resolutions are based: to advance women's right to full and equal representation through the security regime of the UN and in conflict and peacebuilding contexts.[127] CEDAW's General Recommendation No 23 guides States towards removing the barriers to enjoyment of those rights generally.[128] General Recommendation No 30 specifically identified women HRDs in conflict contexts as a specific category at risk of violence by State and non-State actors. It makes explicit the link between such violence and 'women's equal and meaningful participation in political and public life'.[129]

Addressing these barriers means moving beyond individualised approaches that celebrate individual visibility, towards recognising the structural inhibitors that impede both the collective ability and also potentially the willingness of women to participate in public life. For example, the linking of participation with high-level international peace processes naturally prioritises certain classes of women. It implies those with sufficient political, economic and social capital, as well as discursive methods and means acceptable to States and international actors. This in turn creates hierarchies when it comes to participation. The WPS resolutions are 'largely silent' about women with interests diverse to those attached to ideas of participation under the agenda, or those circumscribed as acceptable by internationally led processes.[130] There is a real risk of creating a multi-tier protection system whereby protection beyond the CRSV frame is extended only to the 'right type of participant', usually elite women who can negotiate this system, and are platformed within it.

The way that protection related to participation becomes visible matters. If States advance performative protection, such as visible funding and programming that reproduces the 'saving women' rhetoric that characterised the emergence of the CRSV resolutions, then many women will be unable to

---

[126] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981) 1249 UNTS 13. CEDAW provides the right to participate for women, 'on equal terms with men', in the formulation of government policy and to perform all public functions, which includes peace-building functions: CEDAW, arts 7(b), 8.

[127] R Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (UN Women 2015).

[128] UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 'General Recommendation No. 23: Political and Public Life' (16th Session, 1997) UN Doc A/52/38, para 15.

[129] UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 'General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations' (18 October 2013) UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/30.   [130] O'Rourke (n 57) 142.

avail themselves of those protections. Such initiatives may present further risk and re-essentialise women's participation/agency in line with metanarratives of protecting women rather than guaranteeing their fundamental rights. They also obscure the sexist meta-assumption that underlies the idea of participation under WPS, namely that women who participate are themselves always going to be peaceful.[131] Women at micro-levels, those who are undertaking significant but less overt interventions on an interpersonal basis, and indeed those who do not either self-identify with, or neatly fit into, the peacebuilder/HRD trope,[132] and who may be subject to less-tangible but nonetheless significant threats and risks, may not be able to avail themselves of such protections.

Similarly, the contribution of women's civil society will continue to be shaped by their ability to comply with funding and reporting priorities of international donors, who in turn respond to criteria originating in the UNSC resolutions and associated State-level action plans adopted to implement the agenda. The WPS resolutions are not neutral frameworks when it comes to participation. They import implicit biases into the process through the way participation is framed in the texts. Research already shows that participation 'is … [not] experienced evenly among and across women of different racial, ethnic, economic, political and other backgrounds'.[133] Ignoring these differences among women means also ignoring the differentiated risks that they face. Addressing only a narrow category of risk undermines the potential of the WPS agenda as a normative framework for the global promotion of gender equality.

Focusing on a narrowly defined model of participation therefore compounds the risks of securitisation outlined. It impedes the potential of reading participation and protection as interconnected pillars and as a means towards fulfilment of women's rights in the WPS agenda. To move beyond this, it is necessary to adapt thinking towards an ethics of inclusion and care that casts the net of participation widely and adapts protection to match.

C. Ethics of Care

Absent from the debate about aligning participation and protection is a much-needed focus on an 'ethic of care' underpinning the WPS agenda. If aligning the participation and protection pillars is to avoid falling into a 'rescue narrative', there is need for feminist ethics to underpin the approach to protection taken in the promotion of women's participation. Such ethics should not only disrupt the agent–victim binary but also drive a fundamental shift in how the agenda sees and understands gender. Further, it should disrupt how it sees and understands its role in promulgating legal and political norms that reproduce gendered and

---

[131] H Charlesworth, 'Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building (2008) 16 FemLegalStud 347.   [132] Turner and Swaine (n 3).
[133] O'Rourke (n 57) 145.

racial hierarchies that mediate women's lives.[134] In respect to WPS, as has been shown by feminists across the world, adding women to the established ways of doing things at the UNSC has not resulted in feminist, nor particularly transformative, gendered approaches to peace and security. Going forward methodological approaches that centre ethics of protection and risk will matter for the agenda, and any approaches to the concurrent implementation of these pillars.

Protection is not just about addressing the visceral presence of physical violence and risk, but about understanding the conditions in which women are expected to 'participate'—who sets the rules of the game in the spaces in which they are expected to lead. In reality, spaces such as peace negotiations and their implementation operate in and through exclusionary structures. These involve a 'complex webs of actors', incentives and bartering around contestation for political power over protracted periods.[135] Further, the 'right' to participation comes up against the need for 'efficiency' approaches that aim to justify women's participation to elite actors.[136] Women's participation becomes a one-off participation moment that operates as a form of deference to power, rather than a fundamental shift in how governance, power and inclusion are constructed. Where participation is determined on terms set by the UNSC, rather than those of women themselves, significant ethical questions arise. In particular, a responsibility of care (rather than a paternalistic approach to care) must be shown not only to those who do choose to participate, and who are exposed to physical and reputational risk as a result, but also to those who are not invited.[137] If taken to its logical conclusion, will distinctions be drawn as to the type of woman who is deemed worthy of protection? And will this limit the scope of the UNSC's responsibilities in terms of protection?

Of additional concern are the ethics of continuing to push women to participate in systems where they are faced with an expectation that they will be able to bring about 'gender equality' and even 'protection' for other women, simply by their very presence and participation. Women's participation has come to be equated with agency. Yet as Shepherd notes, 'the definitive conceptual component of agency is the achievement of change, whereas action presumes no such transformation'.[138] There are significant (infra)structural inhibitors that prevent women who participate in public life from achieving these goals, thereby negating that agency.[139] What impact does this have on women themselves? Do those actors pushing women's participation recognise or centre an ethics of care, within that work?

---

[134] F Robertson, *The Ethics of Care: A Feminist Approach to Human Security* (Temple University Press 2018).

[135] JK Westendorf, 'Peace Negotiations in the Political Marketplace: The Implications of Women's Exclusion in the Sudan–South Sudan Peace Process' (2018) 72 AustlJIntlAff 433, 435.

[136] D Landau and A Hirblinger, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking' (2020) 5 SecDialogue 305.   [137] Martín de Almagro (n 30).   [138] Shepherd (n 53) 506.

[139] ibid 511.

The participation pillar of WPS has been considered by many as the one with the most potential for real transformation in gender inequalities.[140] Securitised, paternalistic and unethical approaches to protection risks will not achieve this. The limitations of law and of the UNSC's mandate, and how far it will be willing to go in expanding the normative confines of both pillars, are a central ethical concern.

VI. CONCLUSION

Examining these two pillars in relation to one another has revealed much about the distinctive characteristics of participation and protection in WPS. The advancement of each pillar along parallel trajectories has meant that, importantly, each has been subject to normative growth over time. It has also, however, shown that the normative trajectory has been confined to binarised, and, as a result, limited, ideas of what each pillar would or could encompass during that time. The analysis in this article has identified the ways that the inter-relationship between participation and protection has been acknowledged to date, indicating an emerging and nascent engagement. It has also identified the inherent risks that arise if assumptions are made about the simple melding of these two pillars into a conjoined idea of 'participation-protection'.

A new WPS binary of participation–protection must not emerge. Nor should an expanded understanding of each pillar and their inter-relationship be determined by a comparative off-setting of one against the other. Namely, the balancing of agency on one hand, and victimhood on the other, should be avoided, as should any accompanying assumptions made as to their complementarity. Rather, bringing these two pillars together should reflect and address the power found in a complex understanding of how gender inequalities, risk and barriers make an impact on any potential progress on advancing women's participation, leadership and freedoms in peace and security under this agenda.

How would these and the critical considerations outlined above inform any future cross-pillar engagement by the UNSC? There are some clues in the resolutions. UNSCR 2467 references a 'continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls' and is significant as a basis from which its recognition of the 'mutually reinforcing' relationship between participation and protection can be advanced.[141] Recent country-specific resolutions[142] such as UNSCR 2542 on Libya, recognise 'the need to protect women's rights organisations, and women peacebuilders from threats

---

[140] Martín de Almagro (n 30).   [141] UNSC 2019 (n 40) PP.
[142] Country-specific resolutions are particularly significant in terms of implementation of WPS across the UNSC's mandate. Analysis of the participation–protection nexus within those resolutions is a further area for critical examination through the methods and analytical inquiry begun in this article.

and reprisals'.[143] However the language here needs to move from preambular into operative paragraphs. While UNSCR 2467 does 'condemn acts of discrimination, harassment and violence',[144] it needs to go further than simply recognising the need to protect, or the mutual relationship between the pillars, to action-verb commitments to tackling the barriers,[145] a proactive framing of language getting at the root causes of exclusion. Any future provisions must be operative and must use action-verbs in which the UNSC 'requires' and 'decides' on actions.

There are three main factors to consider in any moves towards normatively addressing the inter-pillar relationship between participation and protection. First, language and commitments should establish dual-pronged approaches that concurrently ensure women's physical safety, while also tackling the structural gendered barriers and risks to participation. Secondly, there is a need to create enabling environments by ensuring that practical access-related barriers and structural-related barriers are concurrently addressed as a priority in efforts to advance women's participation. Finally, the approach needs to engage directly with the 'grey zone' in which the promotion of participation places women. This includes dynamics such as the risks associated with navigating peacebuilding roles, wherein the feminine stereotype of women as peaceful is supposed to protect them as they are expected to lead engagement with violent protagonists, without legal or practical protection.[146] The emphasis should not be on 'women's work', but on taking decisive action that fulfils the right for women to contribute safely to decision-making, whatever their identities or political standpoints.

The opportunities that exist in the interconnections between these two pillars represents the crux upon which future directions of the agenda rest. It is worth remembering that the promotion of women's participation has evolved as a norm in response to normative exclusions, such as the exclusion of women from peace processes. If 'understood as a canary in a coal mine',[147] then the protection risks that arise for women in peace processes are equally a signal of the depth and range of protection risks that arise for women across all aspects of peace and security, including within the UNSC itself and in its peacekeeping operations. The nascent and emerging evidence of the protection risks facing women leaders is simply indicative at this point of the much deeper violence, intimidation and exclusion tactics being used by elites and other actors who assume leadership is their entitlement in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Women should not have to lead with their victimisation in order to achieve the rights that are purportedly available to them, in this case, the right to participate in public life. That the 'woman in conflict'[148] 'has had the worst happen to her'[149] should not be needed here to

---

[143] UNSC Res 2542 (2020) (15 September 2020) UN Doc S/RES/2542 (2020) PP.
[144] UNSC 2019 (n 40) OP 21.   [145] UNSC 2019 (n 41) OP 6.
[146] Turner and Swaine (n 3).   [147] Westendorf (n 135) 449.   [148] Cook (n 34) 353.
[149] Kapur (n 39) 5.

draw attention. By not addressing the participation–protection nexus, WPS fails to engage a key gap in women's rights in conflict. By addressing it, however, there are also perils that are known to exist already within the agenda itself. Rather than a focus on women, or on experiences of violence or risk, it is to 'the conditions for exercising a right' that the WPS agenda now needs to turn.[150]

---

[150] Miller (n 45) 40.