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Women, Peace and Security in a changing climate

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we argue that the effort to get the Women, Peace and Security agenda implemented in a series of bureaucratic institutions has pulled the agenda quite far from its original motivating intent. Indeed, going down the bureaucratic implementation rabbit hole has made it almost impossible for advocates to stay in touch with the foundational WPS question: how do you get to gender-just sustainable peace? As we approach the twentieth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, we argue that WPS advocates need to return to that question, but in doing so, must also acknowledge the changed context. One striking change is that climate breakdown is both more acute and more apparent than in 2000, and any attempt to build gender-just sustainable peace will face serious climate-induced challenges. However, the climate crisis creates not only challenges for the WPS agenda, but also opportunities. The sustainability of peace and of the planet are inextricably linked, and we argue that the realization of the WPS agenda requires transformations to social, political, and, most importantly, economic structures that are precisely the same as the transformations needed to ward off greater climate catastrophe.

KEYWORDS Women, Peace and Security; UNSCR 1325; feminist political economy; climate; peacebuilding

Introduction

The regular anniversaries of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) – 20 years old this year – are appropriately occasions of both celebration and critical assessment. In the first section of this article, we assess progress and make the claim that the effort to get the WPS agenda implemented in a series of bureaucratic institutions has pulled the agenda quite far from its original motivating intent. We query whether WPS advocates have been able to stay in touch with the foundational WPS question: how do you get to gender-just sustainable peace?

We next ask: what happens if we return to ask that original motivating question today? Considering this question anew exposes, we think, two salient, disturbing issues. The first is that many of the structural barriers to achieving gender-just sustainable peace have endured, both unaddressed and untroubled by the WPS agenda. This leads us to revisit the question: was the WPS agenda, even 20 years ago, a sturdy enough vehicle to foster the achievement of gender-just sustainable peace? We argue that from the beginning, there have been critical gaps in the WPS agenda, and in particular we highlight its neglect of transnational economic actors and dynamics as a major impediment to the WPS agenda ever achieving its goals.

The second issue is that, two decades after the inception of the WPS agenda, a clear-eyed assessment of what it will take to achieve those goals must recognize that the world is in some ways strikingly different than in 2000. In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, there has been a global intensification of economic inequality (Oxfam 2019), often the driver of

war and insecurity (Stewart 2008). We have also witnessed the alarming rise of the populist, authoritarian patriarchal right (Graff, Kapur, and Walters 2019) in almost every corner of the world. These changes are tremendously consequential, and are yet to be reckoned with by the WPS agenda. But perhaps the most looming and pervasive change is that climate and ecological breakdown is both more acute and more apparent than in 2000, and this reshapes the context in which all of our attempts to secure a peace that is gender-just and sustainable will take place. Thus, after looking back at the agenda's early and enduring neglect of the ways in which transnational economic systems undermine the possibilities for peace, we turn, in the third section, to climate breakdown and its implications for the WPS agenda.

We argue, ultimately, that it is many of the same economic forces undermining peace that are also leading to environmental and climate breakdown. Consequently, the realization of the WPS agenda requires transformations to social, political, and, most importantly, economic structures that are nearly precisely the same as the transformations needed to ward off greater climate catastrophe.

The WPS agenda: down the rabbit hole

Through the careful strategic thinking and Herculean work of advocates outside and inside the United Nations (UN), UNSCR 1325 has avoided the obscurity into which many Security Council (SC) resolutions fall; it has become instead the foundation of what is commonly known in the international policy community as the “Women, Peace and Security agenda” (or WPS agenda). That agenda, in turn, has shaped (and in part been shaped by), *inter alia*: institutional policies and procedures in international organizations and national governments; the funding priorities of bilateral donors and foundations; the range of activities for which NGOs can – and cannot – access funding; and the research questions of many feminist scholars. Thus, UNSCR 1325, which was revolutionary in its *creation of a space to bring*

women (and, to a lesser degree, gender relations) into public policy discourse on war and security, has also in many ways framed the contents and the *limits of the* space in which women peace activists and gender equality advocates have been able to address war and peacebuilding.

Although at times it seems as though the terms “1325,” “WPS agenda,” and “WPS architecture” are used fairly interchangeably, we think it is worth distinguishing between the *motivating goals* of UNSCR 1325, the *WPS agenda*, *WPS architecture*, *implementation*, and the *impacts* of that implementation. Such distinctions are useful in assessments of feminist strategies for change, but are not often explicit in the scholarship on WPS.

We use *motivating goals* to refer to the problem that activists were trying to solve: ending the ravages of war and building peace free of oppressive gender relations. Once they identified the SC as a critical leverage point for achieving this goal, and made the tactical decision to try for a SC resolution, it was axiomatic that the scope of the *agenda*-defining SC resolution would be restricted by the exigencies of the SC as an institution, including both the parameters of its mandate and its internal politics. In other words, with the tactical turn to the SC, it was inevitable that the *WPS agenda* that emerged would be only a subset of the issues that needed to be addressed to achieve the larger goals (Cohn, Kinsella, and Gibbings 2004; Cockburn 2007; Cohn 2008; Klot 2015).

In bureaucratic institutions, agendas are not translated into actions without *architectures* to make it happen. In the case of UNSCR 1325, this architecture includes the normative documents (including the nine successor resolutions)¹ and guidance documents (such as plans of action, toolkits, and training manuals), as well as the specialized positions and offices that have come into being over last two decades. Creating the architecture is a critical step forward; it is also, of necessity, a selective and interpretive process, which ends up emphasizing some parts of the agenda while de facto whittling away others. For example,

as is well documented, sexual violence is emphasized while prevention of armed conflict has been largely ignored (Meger 2016; Aroussi 2017); “gender perspectives in peacekeeping” is interpreted as a need to add women into peacekeeping forces and provide gender sensitivity training for soldiers who will be deployed in the field, but not as necessitating in-depth training in gender analysis skills for mission planners at headquarters (Simić 2014; Coomaraswamy 2015, 135, 144; Rupesinghe, Starnes, and Karlsrud 2019).

If *architecture* is meant to provide the normative and bureaucratic framework that will mandate and enable *implementation*, it still does not assure it. Departmental Plans of Action and National Action Plans, for example, can be left sitting on shelves (George and Shepherd 2016). Resolutions can call for more women to be appointed as heads of peacekeeping operations or as international negotiators, but institutional leaders can fail to recommend or appoint them (UN Women 2012). Gender units in UN missions can be created but left without sufficient, if any, budgets; they can be situated in physically and bureaucratically isolated locations far from the exercise of power; and they can be staffed with people who are themselves untrained or uninterested in gender analysis, and/or too junior to have meaningful influence (Coomaraswamy 2015, 277; Landgren 2019, 116).

Just as architecture is a necessary but not sufficient precondition for implementation, implementation, in and of itself, does not assure the intended *impact*. Does putting troops through gender trainings actually impact their understandings, attitudes, or behaviors? Do prosecutions for conflict-related sexual violence actually have a deterrent effect that decreases future use of sexual violence as a tactic of war? Does the presence of (just any? how many?) women in a peace negotiation actually lead to a more sustainable and gender-just peace? As none of these is a given, and in each case we can enumerate myriad impediments that can and do militate against the intended impact, it is crucial not only to

avoid conflating implementation and impact, but also to be aware that there can be a tremendous amount of slippage between the two, and to assess each of them separately.

Indeed, when looking at the journey from feminist *goals*, through their translation into the UN's WPS *agenda*, their institutionalization as an *architecture*, their patchy *implementation*, and, finally, any discernible *impacts*, there is considerable slippage at each point along the way. And while one could analyze the reasons for and consequences of each of those slippages, our concern here is more with the process as a whole, which has resulted in a successive narrowing from, and sometimes distortion of, the original intent of the WPS agenda.² That is, the cumulative effect of all of these bureaucratic steps has been to remove us from the goal, from first principles.

This is probably somewhat inevitable; when you invest tremendous amounts of effort in bureaucratic struggles to create an architecture, but still see little impact in what the organization actually *does*, the natural reaction is to push harder down the same path, to invest more energy in repeatedly struggling for implementation of hard-won mechanisms and/or to put new bits of architecture into place. The focused energy and attention required by that daily struggle can make it extremely difficult to stay in touch with the scope of the motivating goal, as you push against stubborn bureaucratic resistance, or seek to identify and prize open the tiny crevices where one might be able to insert useful new language, and do the complicated alliance building that those actions require. That is, as you go deeper down that rabbit hole of pressing for implementation and carving out small bureaucratic wins, it becomes more challenging to remain focused on and re-ask the original motivating question: how can we get to gender-just sustainable peace?

We find that when we re-ask that question today, there is much that has changed (as we will discuss below), but much that is depressingly familiar. What remains the same is that the decision to aim for a UNSCR itself created enduring gaps in the agenda (Cohn 2008).

Some of these gaps have repeatedly been the focus of feminist critics, including the failure to address causes of war, the omission of attempts to tackle militarism and the global arms trade, and the gaping silence around the role of masculinities in driving insecurity and war (see, for example, Kapur and Rees 2019). But other gaps have been relatively neglected. We have long argued that one of the most critical omissions has been the transnational economic dynamics that can have tremendous impacts on the possibility of realizing gender-just sustainable peace (Cohn 2014; Duncanson 2016); we believe this still to be very much the case 20 years on. We also see those same dynamics as underlying the newer challenge to WPS: the increasing speed and severity of climate breakdown. Thus, before turning to climate, we outline what we mean by transnational economic dynamics and why we think that the failure to address them so undermines the potential of the WPS agenda.

Enduring barriers to achieving gender-just sustainable peace: transnational economic dynamics

It is in many ways understandable that the WPS agenda and architecture have focused on the protection and participation of women and girls. Beyond the constraints inherent in the SC's mandate and politics, these were, and still are, painfully salient issues. Gender-based violence in contexts of war had reached new levels of severity in both its nature and prevalence and yet had remained largely unaddressed (Ní Aoláin and Valji 2019). And women from conflict-affected regions around the world were fed up with their exclusion from the processes that can bring wars to an end (Anderlini 2019).

But what this focus obscured was the set of largely economic, transnational processes and dynamics that are just as, if not more, decisive in whether a gender-just, sustainable peace can be achieved.³ This is because in the aftermath of the formal political settlement of an armed conflict, a raft of predictable processes and dynamics are set in motion (see, for

example Berdal and Zaum 2013; Langer and Brown 2016). While the specifics will differ from country to country, physical infrastructure will be rebuilt (at least to some degree and in some form); issues of lack of livelihoods and deficits in health and education will be addressed (in some way); external revenue will be raised for reconstruction and governance (including loans from international financial institutions, and multi-lateral and bi-lateral official development assistance (ODA), often associated with various conditionalities); there will be greater integration into the global economic system, including pressure from donors to open up national markets to international trade; and private multinational economic actors will take the increased stability as an opportunity to come in to extract resources such oil, gas, timber, and minerals, or to amass large tracts of land for agribusiness. For all of these, a plethora of international actors will play a major role in how these processes do – and do not – occur. And the specific logics of a global capitalist economic system and its key institutions will be shaping, and in many cases determining, the outcomes, often far more than any national democratic process or set of political agreements in a peace settlement.

We need, then, when thinking about peace processes and peacebuilding, to highlight two related disjunctures. The first is between the national or binational scope of most peace agreements and the internationality of the factors contributing to the war and shaping the conditions of the post-war society. That is, no matter how much an armed conflict is framed as a “civil war” or “insurgency,” there are increasingly and almost inevitably cross-border forces feeding the war, from personnel, weapons, and remittances, to the reliance on embeddedness in global political alliances and global economic market relations (both licit and illicit) for funding the fighting (see Kaldor 2012). When national political settlements are made by the immediate “parties to the conflict,” those extra-national forces do not disappear, and additional forces crowd in. So any group hoping to shape social, political, and economic

relations in the post-war society, including advocates of the WPS agenda, must take those extra-national forces into account, and analyze how best to engage with them.

The second disjuncture is between formal political agreements and the material conditions in the real world required for their realization. While WPS advocates expect that women's participation in peace processes and post-war governance will result in the inclusion of women's human rights and other socially transformative provisions, the *realization* or enjoyment of human rights requires more than formal political guarantees.⁴ First, it requires changes in how people *think* about gendered power relations, and this requires long-term support for transformations in educational and media institutions, as well as for the grassroots women's civil society organizations that are often active in working to transform patriarchal ideologies.

But, crucially, the enjoyment of rights requires more than a belief in those rights; it requires a set of *material conditions*. And here, unfortunately, is where many of the international political economic dynamics, processes, and actors referenced above can have the effect of undermining the transformative provisions for which women and other civil society participants have fought in peace agreements. For example, while women participants in peace processes might fight for inclusion of provisions granting women the rights to inherit and own land and/or ensuring Indigenous people's rights to their ancestral territories, these rights can be negated by the actions of transnational extractive or industrialized agriculture corporations. Examples of this abound, from the Guatemala Nickel Company, a subsidiary of the Canadian company Hudbay Minerals, employing rape of Indigenous women in northern Guatemala as a method of dispossessing Indigenous communities of their land (Imai, Maheandiran, and Crystal 2014; Méndez Gutiérrez and Carrera Guerra 2015), to biofuel companies in Sierra Leone negotiating with male village elders to gain access to lands traditionally controlled by women in the community (Millar 2015; Ryan 2018). As

competition for access to resources increases, and the demand on land makes it an asset on which investors speculate (de Schutter 2016, 12), the likelihood that women can realize their rights to land recedes further from view. Already, since 2000, over 1073 “large-scale land deals” have been concluded, covering an estimated total of almost 40 million hectares, and most of these deals have taken place in war-affected countries seen as underexploited sites for industrialized agriculture, such as Indonesia, Cambodia, Mozambique, Laos, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (de Schutter 2016, 10).

Or, to choose another of these international political economic dynamics, the post-war economic recovery prescriptions of international lenders and donors, when they include shrinking and/or privatizing state services, have the effects of closing down a key source of women’s employment (since in many countries women’s employment is heavily weighted in the state sector) and of increasing women’s subsistence and care burdens – when, for example, privatization of the local water supply increases the time that women spend walking to access water, or the defunding of nearby health services means that the care of wounded and disabled relatives becomes wholly women’s responsibility (see Peterson 2009; Jacobson 2013; True et al. 2017). In these and other cases, the sheer time burden that women face makes their social, economic, and political participation in the post-war society far more difficult and less likely (de Alwis, Mertus, and Sajjad 2013) – a direct counter to the WPS agenda’s goals of increasing women’s political participation and empowerment.

It is not that the WPS agenda has ignored economic dynamics entirely. Several WPS UNSCRs reference the need to tackle the socioeconomic barriers to women’s participation and to empower women economically, but the WPS agenda tends to conceptualize women’s economic empowerment in a particular way, as individual betterment achieved through inclusion in the labor force or market (Duncanson 2019; Martín de Almagro and Ryan 2019). As feminists have long pointed out, this form of empowerment is rarely a route out of

economic insecurity for women; it is a far cry from the original concept of women's empowerment, which was envisaged as a process involving the collective pursuit of structural change (Batliwala 2007). In the WPS agenda, socioeconomic inequalities appear as local problems, often linked to patriarchal cultures, while the transnational economic dynamics that drive those inequalities are more or less absent. Yet, it will be impossible to realize the goals of the WPS agenda without transforming those dynamics and the political economic assumptions upon which they are based.

New threats: climate breakdown

These transnational economic dynamics have been undermining the WPS agenda from its outset; now, 20 years on, related impediments to achieving gender-just sustainable peace have emerged. A global intensification of economic inequality and the rise of the right are two obvious depressing shifts, but perhaps the most inescapable and alarming threat is the impending breakdown of the climate. Although environmental destruction has been happening for a long time, we are now facing an unprecedented climate, ecological, and mass extinction emergency. We argue that it is impossible for WPS advocates to work toward, or even talk about, peace and security without centering this.

The environmental emergency that we face includes a whole range of elements, including climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, pollution, and land degradation. We focus here on climate breakdown because it would be impossible to cover in this short article the many ways in which human activity is pushing Earth's ecosystems beyond their capacities to support life on this planet. They are all in any case interconnected, and as such we hope to convey something of the importance of biodiversity loss, for example, even while concentrating most directly on climate breakdown. We prefer the terms climate "breakdown," "disruption," "crisis," and "catastrophe" to "climate change," because, as an editorial

decision by the *Guardian* newspaper recently noted, the phrase “climate change” “sounds rather passive and gentle when what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity” (Carrington 2019).

So how and why should the climate crisis be understood as integral to the possibility of ever meeting the goals of the WPS agenda? We highlight three issues. First, if it was the threat that war posed to women’s human security that was at the heart of the WPS agenda, it is now clear that women’s human security – in fact all people’s – will never be attained unless we can also deal with the climate and ecological emergency. Second, even if we stay focused only on traditional conceptions of security – that is, addressing armed conflict and war – we need to address the ways in which climate breakdown can play a role in extending or intensifying violent conflict. Third, climate breakdown has to transform our understanding of peacebuilding. It increasingly defines the context in which peacebuilding takes place, requiring us to consider not just climate breakdown’s impacts on peacebuilding, but also the ways in which peacebuilding will have effects on climate breakdown and citizens’ ability to cope with it.

Climate breakdown as a threat to human security

The climate crisis poses an enormous direct threat to human security, including women’s human security, making it a fundamental impediment to realizing the goals of the WPS agenda. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s *Human Development Report 1994* introduced the concept of human security, arguing that to achieve meaningful security for people, it was crucial to include access to such basic rights as food, livelihoods, shelter, and some protection from disease and ill-health (UNDP 1994). Climate breakdown directly undermines all of them. A few brief snapshots of climate breakdown makes clear the futility of talking about women’s security without taking climate into account.

Consider food security. As global warming accelerates, ocean temperatures, acidity, and pollution are all rising, damaging not only marine biodiversity and ecosystems but the fisheries upon which so many rely. About 97 percent of the world's fisherfolk live in developing countries, and fishing is their major source of food and income; fish accounts for over 50 percent of animal protein in many least developed countries (World Bank 2012, xi, 30). Ninety percent of the world's fish stocks are already fully exploited or overexploited (Kituyi and Thomson 2018). Climate-related disasters, such as heatwaves, droughts, monsoons, and hurricanes harm agricultural productivity and undermine food availability, with knock-on effects causing food price hikes and income losses that further reduce people's access to food (IPCC 2012; FAO et al. 2019). The number of these climate-related disasters has doubled since the early 1990. An average of 213 of these events occurred every year during the period from 1990 to 2016. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that 124 million people were facing crisis levels of acute food insecurity in 2017 (FAO et al. 2019).

Consider displacement. Climate disruption is intensifying the global water cycle, with wetter regions generally becoming wetter and drier regions becoming even drier. An estimated 3.6 billion people (nearly half the global population) live in areas that are potentially water-scarce at least one month per year, and this population could increase to some 4.8–5.7 billion by 2050 (WWAP/UN-Water 2018). Meanwhile, with sea levels rising, other areas are under threat not from drought but because their land is already or soon to be submerged by water. Sea levels are rising at increasing rates as ice melts and warming seawater expands, while nearly 2.4 billion people (about 40 percent of the world's population) live within 60 miles of the coast (NASA Science n.d.). As a result of these and other climate-related factors, people in many parts of the world are already being forced to

leave their homes, livelihoods, and communities on an unprecedented scale, a trend that will only accelerate.

Consider health. Climate breakdown is leading to changes in patterns of prevalence and incidence of infectious disease. According to *The Lancet*, the climate crisis threatens to undermine the last half-century of gains in development and global health (Watts et al. 2015).

Of course, all of these threats to human security have specifically gendered dimensions that further undermine the aspiration for women's security embedded in the WPS agenda. Among them, women often bear the brunt of coping with climate-related shocks and stresses because of the roles assigned to them in many areas of the world, including food management, water procurement, and caring for family members (Leach 2015; Kronsell 2019). As alternative sources of food, water, and income need to be found, and the sick need to be cared for, the burden of additional work often falls on women (Habtezion 2012). As well as increasing women's burdens, the climate-induced threats to human security can exacerbate or entrench pre-existing gendered inequalities. If, as is the case in many cultures, men are presumed to deserve or need to have access to the best food, the most food, and the most protein-rich types of food, women are going to be rendered less able than men to respond to climate breakdown (BRIDGE 2014). Scholars of forced displacement note that women are often "less mobile and less monied" and as such face particular challenges when their homes and livelihoods come under threat (Giles 2013). Likewise, health crises can be more lethal for women, for whom health facilities are more often unavailable or unaffordable (UNEP 2016). In short, climate breakdown is a massive, multidimensional, gender-differentiated threat to human security.

Climate breakdown as a contributor to war

It is hard to imagine how, in any country subject to the effects outlined above, people's lives could ever be imagined as "peaceful" or "secure."⁵ On those grounds alone, any agenda concerned with women, peace, and security must engage with this threat, which is even more pervasive than armed conflict. But even taking only the narrowest construal of the WPS agenda as centered on war, climate breakdown still needs to be confronted, because of the ways in which it amplifies the well-documented drivers of armed conflict such as poverty, inequalities, and economic shocks.

While climate change does not directly cause violent conflict (see, for example, Buhaug 2015; Selby 2019), evidence suggests that climactic conditions in combination and interaction with socio-economic and political factors can intensify it (Koubi 2019). For example, this can occur when: governments cannot or do not fairly distribute resources that climate breakdown has rendered increasingly scarce, such as water, arable lands, pasturing lands, and so on (Brzoska and Frölich 2016); when increased migration due to climate disruption leads to additional pressure on stressed humanitarian and governance systems (Koubi et al. 2018; Abel et al. 2019); when governments cannot or do not mitigate the volatility of food prices and provision (Beniston 2010; Calzadilla et al. 2013); and when societies cannot or do not prevent economic opportunities disappearing (Mobjörk 2017).

None of this is to imply that climate breakdown should be conceived of as demanding a militarized response, as if it were a threat to individual states' national security. To see it principally in those terms is to betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the social and economic causes and impacts of our environmental collapse. It also risks empowering militaries, which are not only embodiments of a regressive worldview that is part of the problem – that of self-interested units in perpetual competition – but are also major polluters and producers of greenhouse gases (Duncanson 2017).⁶ But while we are not sanguine about climate being incorporated into conventional national security discourses, we *are* arguing that

the WPS agenda needs to take climate breakdown and the effects that it has on exacerbating and intensifying violent conflict much more seriously.

Climate breakdown is increasingly the context within which peacebuilding takes place

Whatever the degree to which climate change is implicated in intensifying wars, what will be true in all wars is that the attempt to build sustainable peace will take place in, and be made much more challenging by, climate breakdown. Building peace requires the provision of jobs and livelihoods, at the same time as climate breakdown destroys the conditions for maintaining traditional livelihoods. Building peace requires addressing issues around land reform and restitution, at the same time as climate breakdown reduces the quality and quantity of land available for sustaining livelihoods, and forces yet more people to leave their homes. Building peace requires dealing with the injuries caused by war as well as the health needs that went unaddressed during war, while climate breakdown puts additional pressure on health services through the rise in infectious diseases. Building peace requires the rebuilding of physical infrastructure – everything from roads and railways to power grids – at the same time as climate breakdown causes an increase in extreme weather events that destroy such infrastructure.

Furthermore, peace agreement implementation and post-war reconstruction require tremendous financial resources, and peace already often founders on the lack of implementation – especially with regard to gender equality provisions (Bell 2015). But the financial, governmental, and human resources for peacebuilding, and for implementing the WPS agenda in peacebuilding, will become yet more scarce as post-war countries simultaneously try to deal with the humanitarian crises provoked by drought, heatwaves, flooding from monsoons and hurricanes; the intensified prevalence and incidence of infectious disease; greater food insecurity; and climate-based displacement.

As if climate breakdown's effects on peacebuilding were not already enough of a challenge to how we imagine doing successful peacebuilding, WPS advocates will also need to consider the effects of peacebuilding *on* climate disruption, and on citizens' resources to cope with it. For instance, decisions about post-war economic recovery – jobs, land reform, infrastructure – should *not only* consider the key peacebuilding question of whether they deepen or transform pre-existing inequalities (for example, are employment schemes inclusive of women?; do land tenure systems and agricultural policy support the multi-cropping of smallholder farmers or the large-scale land acquisition and mono-cropping of agribusiness interests?; do roadbuilding plans prioritize local-level feeder roads and access to markets, healthcare, and schools, or only main highways to facilitate large-scale resource extraction?). Now, these policy decisions must *also* be made in light of their effects on climate disruption, and must assess whether the proposed solutions will be sustainable as the climate continues to change (for example, will jobs created be in sectors that are contributing to climate breakdown or combating it?; will roadbuilding materials, labor power, and technologies be responsive to predictable climate-related conditions, such as flooding that is more frequent and severe?; will land and agricultural policy take into account the increasing climate-related vulnerability of mono-crop agriculture, as well as the climate costs of petrochemical-heavy forms of farming?).⁷

The need for a paradigm shift

When we ask the motivating WPS question again, two decades on, it is clear that the challenges facing the WPS agenda are immense. Not only do WPS advocates have to deal with the root cause issues that were originally excluded, including the transnational economic dynamics that undermine gender-just sustainable peace; we also have to reckon with the ever more apparent and acute environmental emergency. Peace now has to be accomplished in a

context in which security of all kinds is being undermined to an unprecedented degree. If women ever do get a seat at the table, the current focus of so much WPS energy, it is going to be in the midst of the worst crisis for humanity in global history.

However, the climate emergency also provides an opportunity. The very severity of the emergency makes it clear that we need radical solutions, a transformation to our approach to living on earth. There is a need for an overhaul of the social, political, and – crucially – economic systems that govern human societies. For, as is increasingly acknowledged across the political spectrum in many countries (see *Guardian* 2019), climate breakdown is caused by our particular economic system, our current form of extractivist capitalism. Extractivist capitalism relies on the exploitation of natural resources as if they were unlimited, and “externalizes” the environmental costs of production, from pollution to the release of greenhouse gases (Daly 1996; Benería, Berik, and Floro 2015; Leach 2015). Through its dependence on fossil fuels for cheap energy and industrial agriculture that over-exploits soil and water supplies, extractivist capitalism destroys the environment as it champions growth at all costs (Daly 1996; Benería, Berik, and Floro 2015; Leach 2015). Its neoliberal insistence on “liberating” free markets and vilifying regulations and collective action has made it impossible for people to act to stop climate breakdown (Klein 2015).

To address and arrest climate change, we need a paradigm shift in how we conceptualize the functioning and purpose of the economy. And as should by now be obvious from what we have written above, we believe that the paradigm shift required to tackle climate breakdown is the very same one that is required to achieve the original goal of the WPS agenda: gender-just sustainable peace. It is the obsession with growth that guides the transnational economic dynamics that undermine any rights that women might win at the peace table. It is that same obsession that continues to speed us down the road to climate catastrophe, despite ever more visible danger signs and knowledge about where this will lead.

The paradigm shift that we need for gender-just sustainable peace, and the paradigm shift that the planet needs to survive this climate emergency, is a *feminist green transformation*. In arguing for such a transformation, we are not just making another call for green economies, or green new deals.⁸ These come in many guises, but too often they are market-based approaches that involve the commodification and enclosure of resources and commons, undermining livelihoods, justifying land- and green-grabs (Borras Jr. et al. 2011; Fairhead et al. 2012; Kari-Oca 2 Declaration 2012; Mehta et al. 2012), and dispossessing local people, especially women food producers. And too often, their attention to gendered power relations and global justice issues is all but non-existent (see, for example, Bauhardt 2014; Harcourt and Nelson 2015; Littig 2017). Instead, we are calling for a *feminist green transformation*: an entire paradigm shift that restructures production, consumption, and political-economic relations along truly sustainable pathways, with feminist analysis at the core.⁹ Just as Indigenous communities have long argued (Kari-Oca Declaration 1992; Kari-Oca 2 Declaration 2012), we need an economic system oriented toward human provisioning and ecosystem health and regeneration, rather than exploitation, extraction, and depletion of natural and human resources in the service of profit and GDP growth. We need to unapologetically claim the mantle of “realism” for an economic system based on an ethics of care – for people and planet – over the short-sighted, destructive ethic of limitless individualistic acquisition and corporate concentration of wealth; that recognizes interdependence – among people and among nations – as the basis for mutual collaborative action, rather than mutual armament; and that recognizes that the goal of sufficiency, of ensuring livelihoods and lives of dignity, will never be achieved in a system that deepens, rather than transforms, inequalities.

Conclusion

The WPS story – the invention of the WPS agenda, the creation of an architecture meant to actualize it, the fight to get it implemented, and the many inventive ways in which women around the world have found to employ it in their struggles – is in many ways a heroic one. It is also a painfully frustrating one, if you consider the quantities of time, thought, organization, and energy that have been poured into it, in contrast to how little progress there has been in changing the male-dominated war system and the terrible price that women pay for it, and how very far away we are from the goal of gender-just sustainable peace.

But what must be acknowledged, now more than ever, is that this effort has not only been heroic and frustrating, a story in which our goals can be reached if only we can better mobilize to vanquish those who would stand in the way of WPS progress; it is a story that has to change. It is an agenda that has to change, in part because it was, for complex political reasons, limited even in its own time, and in part because it is now utterly inadequate to the time and the crisis in which we live.

Climate breakdown will multiply and intensify the problems that the WPS agenda aims to solve, it will severely deplete the already anemic resources available to deal with them, and it will rob us of the luxury of time to engage in working for small wins through bureaucratic business as usual. The twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, then, must be seized as a vital opportunity – not only to reflect on the WPS agenda, but also on the ways in which it, and we, are uneasily situated in the current historical moment, and on the urgency of devising new approaches to the challenges to come. Imagine what could happen if even half of the feminist thought, energy, and action that has gone into WPS advocacy were now turned loose on envisioning and effecting the paradigm shifts that are now so desperately needed.

Our own thoughts about the path forward: we have concluded that we need to develop a feminist political economic analysis of the transnational actors and processes that threaten

the sustainability of both peace and the planet. We need to map routes of intervention in those processes. And we need to articulate policy alternatives based in transformational approaches to our understanding of the nature and purposes of economic activity, and of humans' relation to the planet. We have been calling this a "Feminist Roadmap for Sustainable Peace" (Cohn 2017; Consortium on Gender, Security & Human Rights n.d.). In this short time we have to envision, promulgate and enact the paradigm shift needed to reverse the current path to climate catastrophe, it is our hope and belief that the Feminist Roadmap for Sustainable Peace can make an important contribution.

Notes

1 The nine successor UNSCRs are 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

2 This slippage between motivating goals, formulation of a policy agenda, the architecture developed to achieve it, implementation, and the desired impacts is not a story that is unique to WPS, of course. For example, note the way in which feminist aspirations were restricted by the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals in ways that have hampered socioeconomic justice for women (Cornwall and Rivas 2015). Efforts to work with and within institutions always involve the need to translate goals into a language that can be understood and deemed actionable by colleagues – hence the large scholarship on the potential risks and pitfalls of "insider" feminist strategies (Eisenstein 1996; Hawkesworth 2006; Caglar, Prügl, and Zwingel 2013; Eyben and Turquet 2013). Some of this scholarship claims that despite the risks, small reforms can sometimes lead to more radical transformation (see, for example, Cockburn 1989; Eyben and Turquet 2013).

3 The arguments in this section are largely based on, and laid out in more detail in, Cohn (2014) and Cohn (2017).

4 This is something that Deniz Kandiyoti (2007) illustrates so well in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq.

5 Of course, it is important to note that not everyone's lives will be equally affected – that there will be differential impacts both between countries and within countries. Worldwide, it is the people who have the fewest economic, political, and social resources, as well as those whose livelihoods are tied to specific landscapes and those who live in especially vulnerable areas such as coastal or arid zones, who will be among the most impacted (see, for example, UNFCCC 2018).

6 The US military, for example, is single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world (see Crawford 2019).

7 For more on the inextricability of the climate crisis and the WPS agenda, as well as reflections on the ways in which some of the same troubling patterns that we have seen in WPS discourse are already emerging in the policy discourse on women and the climate crisis, see Cohn (2020).

8 It is also absolutely not a call for women to be valued as naturally superior stewards of the world's resources; just as WPS advocates have long been wary of the equation of women with peace, we are advocating for attention to climate breakdown while absolutely resisting any equation of women with nature (see, for example, Arora-Jonsson 2011; Resurrección 2013; Leach 2015; Kronsell 2019).

9 Here we draw from and seek to contribute to ideas in Nelson (2012), Wichterich (2012), Benería, Berik, and Floro (2015), Leach (2015), Raworth (2017), and Bauhardt and Harcourt (2018), as well as the Kari-Oca Declarations. See also Cohn and Duncanson (2020).

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