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Women, Peace and Security After Europe's 'Refugee Crisis'

Aiko Holvikivi and Audrey Reeves

Since its inception in 2000, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has conceptualized the conflict-affected woman as a subject worthy of international attention, protection, and inclusion. In the wake of Europe's 'refugee crisis', this article examines how the remit of WPS has broadened from women in conflict zones to refugees in Europe's borderlands. A minority of European states now attend, in their WPS policy, to these conflict-affected women on the move. This inclusion productively challenges established notions of where conflict-affectedness is located. It exposes Europe as not always peaceful and safe for women, especially refugees who flee war. Conversely, the dominant tendency to exclude refugees from European WPS policy is built on a fantasy of Europe as peaceful and secure for women, which legitimizes the fortressing of Europe and obscures European states' complicity in fueling insecurity at their borders, cultivating an ethos of coloniality around the WPS agenda. The inclusion of refugees is no panacea to these problems. If focused solely on protection, it repositions European states as protective heroes and conflict-affected women as helpless victims. The WPS framework nonetheless emphasizes conflict-affected women's participation in decision-making and conflict prevention, opening space for recognizing the refugee women as political actors.

Keywords: refugees; Women, Peace and Security; conflict; Europe; borders

We call on the Security Council and all UN Member States to use a gender lens to address the challenges faced by women who have been forcibly displaced ... and to recommit to working towards the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Suaad Allami on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security,

28 October 2014

On 28 October 2014, Suaad Allami, a prominent women's rights activist from Iraq, addressed the United Nations (UN) Security Council and representatives of UN Member States on the challenges faced by women whose lives are uprooted as a consequence of armed conflict. Allami's intervention took place in the context of the Security Council's annual open debate on Women, Peace and Security.¹ Every year, an open debate marks the anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in October 2000. The latter marked a watershed moment in women's struggle for better inclusion and representation in matters relating to international conflict and peace. Remarkably, Resolution 1325 successfully drew

¹ United Nations, 'Transcript of Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security 28 October 2014', available at: {<http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/wpsdebateoctober2014.pdf>} accessed 23 January 2020.

international attention to the conflict-affected woman as a subject worthy of attention, inclusion and protection in matters of peace and security.² Of course, women's organisations had long voiced demands for inclusion in peace and security decision-making in the realm of women's peace activism. The UN Security Council's recognition of those demands lent them 'symbolic capital' – gravitas and seriousness.³ This spurred the development of the WPS agenda: a dynamic, fast-growing, and globalizing ecosystem of national and international legislation, policies, and advocacy efforts.⁴ As of January 2020, the WPS agenda includes nine further Security Council resolutions; dedicated action plans developed by regional organizations such as NATO, the EU, and 83 national governments; programmes administered by UN Women and other international agencies; and innumerable interventions by civil society actors who debate these policies, implement their mandates, and monitor implementation.⁵ Various actors, ranging from Hillary Clinton in her capacity as US Secretary of State, Michelle Bachelet as Executive Director of UN Women, Anders Fogh Rasmussen as NATO Secretary

² Sam Cook, 'The "woman-in-conflict" at the UN Security Council: A subject of practice', *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 353-72.

³ Dianne Otto, 'The Security Council's alliance of gender legitimacy: The symbolic capital of Resolution 1325,' in Hilary Charlesworth and Jean-Marc Coicaud (eds), *Fault Lines of International Legitimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 239-75.

⁴ 'Funmi Olonisakin and Karen Barnes, 'Introduction,' in 'Funmi Olonisakin, Karen Barnes, and Eka Ikpe (eds), *Women, Peace and Security: Translating Policy into Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 3-14, p.7.

⁵ WILPF, 'Member States', available at: {<http://peacewomen.org/member-states>} accessed 16 March 2020; Carol Cohn, 'Mainstreaming gender in UN security policy: A path to political transformation?,' in Shirin Rai and Georgina Waylen (eds), *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 185-206.

General, UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie, and many others, convincingly established connections between *women, peace and security* as relevant to the business of ‘serious’ international security – an unprecedented success.⁶

As the WPS agenda grew, and interventions multiplied around the world to better address the needs of the conflict-affected woman, it drew on and constructed an archetypical figure of this woman as located *in* the conflict zone - the woman-*in*-conflict. This archetype derives in part from interventions by activists like Allami, selected by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to address the UN Security Council during annual open debates on WPS.⁷ This archetype has three features. First, she has national origins in a country conventionally understood as in conflict, or emerging from it. For instance, Allami is originally from Iraq. As the WPS agenda emerges out of the Security Council, the notion of what counts as a conflict-affected country derives from those political contexts ‘officially “on the agenda” of the Council’.⁸ This has led the NGO Working Group on WPS to select speakers who, like Allami, are from countries that the five permanent members of the Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) agree to recognize as in conflict and eligible for international

⁶ Cynthia Enloe, *Seriously! Investigating crashes and crises as if women mattered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p.9.

⁷ Sheri Lynn Gibbins, ‘No angry women at the United Nations: Political dreams and the cultural politics of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13:4 (2011), pp. 522-38.

⁸ Cook, ‘The “woman-in-conflict”’, p.365.

interventions such as peace missions. Since 2003, this includes Iraq, where the UN has an ongoing mission (UNAMI), as well as a majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.⁹ Second, this archetypical woman-*in*-conflict has directly witnessed and endured the deleterious effects of armed violence in her native country.¹⁰ For instance, Allami spoke of witnessing ‘how displaced women and girls are affected when they are forced to flee’ in the context of her daily work at the Women for Progress Center in Baghdad.¹¹ Third, the conflict-affected woman as she is imagined in the WPS context is statically located *in* the conflict zone. The posited congruency between the speaker’s national origins, her lived experience of conflict, and her current place of dwelling has been a recurrent feature of speeches delivered by women civil society leaders at Security Council open debates, in spite of the fact that these women often have experiences of international mobility.¹² Allami, for instance, pursued graduate studies in the United States. Her speech did not mention this, emphasizing instead her lived experience of war in Iraq. Even as she evoked forced displacement, Allami embodied this woman-*in*-conflict.

Suaad Allami’s presence as a speaker thus reproduced an established representation of the conflict-affected woman, and yet, her statement broke with tradition by drawing Member States’ attention to the condition of women and girls forcibly displaced by war.

⁹ Gibbings, ‘No angry women’.

¹⁰ Cook, ‘The “woman-in-conflict”’, p.365.

¹¹ United Nations, ‘Transcript’, p.8.

¹² Cook, ‘The “woman-in-conflict”’.

Her intervention carved space for what this article argues is an emerging but contested inclusion of a new figure, the conflict-affected woman on the move, within advocacy and policy on WPS. This inclusion marks a break from tradition in the WPS agenda. The UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS include few provisions on the protection of forcibly displaced women and girls. These provisions only place obligations on UN agencies, governmental bodies, and armed groups operating in countries where an armed conflict is taking place – following the Council’s narrow understanding of the term.¹³ Partly for this reason, the WPS agenda has so far paid limited attention to the conflict-affected woman who moves away from such conventionally defined conflict zones. Writing in the wake of Europe’s so-called refugee crisis, we document the emergent inclusion of the conflict-affected woman on the move in WPS policy and, to a lesser extent, activism. This inclusion, we suggest, challenges established notions of conflict-affectedness, of security, and of imagined distinctions between a peaceful Europe and a conflict-ridden Global South.

Conversely, some European states’ reluctance to address forced displacement at their borders as a WPS concern contributes to the fortressing of Europe. The common notion that European WPS policy should be focused on foreign policy only, and therefore

¹³ Aiko Holvikivi and Audrey Reeves, "The WPS Agenda and the ‘Refugee Crisis’: Missing Connections and Missed Opportunities in Europe," Laura Shepherd and Paul Kirby eds. *LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series*, LSE, 2017, available at: {<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/06/26/the-wps-agenda-and-the-refugee-crisis-missing-connections-and-missed-opportunities-in-europe-aiko-holvikivi-and-audrey-reeves-62017/>} accessed 6 September 2017.

exclude questions of asylum, reveals the colonial underbelly of the WPS agenda. It draws on, and reproduces, the twin assumptions that insecurity resides outside of Europe, and that conflict-affected women do not need to be empowered vis-à-vis European states.¹⁴ These assumptions, implicit in refugee-blind WPS policy, support the hardening of European borders by naturalizing an imagined hierarchical difference between a safe Europe and an unsafe extra-European space. The entrenchment of this projected distinction obscures Europe's multiple connections to the broader world, and its complicity in fueling conflicts globally. In addition, the material hardening of European borders limits access to asylum, thus constricting survival options for conflict-affected women on the move. This two-pronged argument – that WPS policy unsettles colonial structures when it is refugee-aware, and reinforces them when it is refugee-blind – contributes to feminist security scholarship that examines how the WPS agenda interprets and addresses the needs and rights of conflict-affected women.¹⁵ It also highlights

¹⁴ Swati Parashar, 'The WPS Agenda: A postcolonial critique,' in Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 829-39; Nicola Pratt, 'Reconceptualising gender, reinscribing racial-sexual boundaries in international security: The case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security"', *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:4 (2013), pp. 772-83.

¹⁵ Soumita Basu, 'Gender as national interest at the UN Security Council', *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 255-73; Cohn, 'Mainstreaming gender.:'; Funmi Olonisakin, Karen Barnes, and Eka Ikpe, *Women, peace and security: translating policy into practice* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2011); Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 373-92; Maria Martin de Almagro and Caitlin Ryan, 'Subverting economic empowerment: Towards a postcolonial-feminist framework on gender (in)securities in post-war settings', *European Journal of International Relations*, 25:4 (2019), pp. 1059-79; Audrey Reeves, 'Feminist Knowledge and Emerging Governmentality in UN Peacekeeping', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14:3 (2012), pp. 348-69.

entanglements of gender, race, and place in European policy-making that will be of interest to critical literature on migration and European identity.¹⁶

The article progresses as follows. First, we conceptualize the conflict-affected woman on the move as she is emerging as a new subject of concern for the WPS agenda. Second, we introduce the methodology through which we map this emergence, with an emphasis on European national action plans (NAPs) on WPS, where she remains a marginal presence. Third, we consider the logics according to which conflict-affected women on the move to Europe are sometimes included as objects of WPS policy and fourth, those according to which they remain excluded in a majority of national contexts and at the EU level. We problematize this exclusion on the grounds that it obscures the complicity of European states in creating or exacerbating the insecurity of conflict-affected women and (re)produces harmful bordering practices. Simultaneously, we show that inclusion is no panacea and is typically done in a way that re-establishes the conflict-affected woman as a victim in need of European states' help, with only a few acknowledging her potential as a transformative agent. We conclude that exclusion is harmful and must be resisted,

¹⁶ David Moffette and Shaira Vadasaria, 'Uninhibited violence: race and the securitization of immigration', *Critical Studies on Security*, 4:3 (2016), pp. 291-305; Victoria M. Basham, 'Liberal militarism as insecurity, desire and ambivalence: Gender, race and the everyday geopolitics of war', *Security Dialogue*, 49:1-2 (2018), pp. 32-43; Harriet Gray and Anja K. Franck, 'Refugees as/at risk: The gendered and racialized underpinnings of securitization in British media narratives', *Security Dialogue*, 50:3 (2019), pp. 275-91; Adrian Little and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats, saving lives, securing subjects: Humanitarian borders in Europe and Australia', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:3 (2016), pp. 533-56.

and that the integration of refugees in WPS policies can be beneficially transformative to the extent that WPS has a tradition of emphasizing women's political participation and their role in conflict prevention.

Conflict-affected women on the move: From the conflict zone to the militarized borderland

This is her home

this thin edge of

barbwire.

Gloria Anzaldúa¹⁷

Since the beginning of 2015, a rising number of women and girls have attempted a perilous and often deadly journey to reach Europe through the sea or surrounding countries in the Mediterranean area, contributing to what is referred to in media and policy discourses as Europe's refugee crisis.¹⁸ In 2016, the UN Refugee Agency

¹⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), p.35.

¹⁸ Georg Löffmann and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Vernacular imaginaries of European border security among citizens: From walls to information management', *European Journal of International Security*, 3:3 (2018), pp. 382-400; Jane Freedman, *Gendering the International Asylum and Refugee Debate*, Second ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.197; Seth M. Holmes and Heide Castañeda, 'Representing the "European refugee crisis" in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death', *American Ethnologist*, 43:1 (2016), pp. 12-24; BBC, 'Europe Migrant Crisis', available at:

estimated that women, together with minors, counted for nearly 60 percent of migrants arriving at Europe's borders, many of whom were forcibly displaced by war.¹⁹ While the presence of asylum seekers at the borders of Europe is not new, violent conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and Somalia increased the absolute number of forcibly displaced people in recent years, the proportion of women amongst them, and overall levels of insecurity experienced at the borders of Europe.²⁰ Women experience distinct and acute forms of insecurity, and face higher rates of mortality than men.²¹ Due to the closing down of borders, women who attempt to journey towards and across Europe are increasingly reliant on smugglers, rendering them more vulnerable to abuse or sexual exploitation as payment for their passage.²² For women who make it to reception and transit centres, new challenges emerge in the form of rampant gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, early and forced marriage, and domestic violence. Governmental agencies are often not able to prevent or respond to these gendered forms of violence in meaningful ways.²³ Police and security forces have, at times, exacerbated

{<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32395181>} accessed 26 November 2018; European Commission, 'Refugee Crisis in Europe', available at: {<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis>} accessed 26 November 2018.

¹⁹ Tania Karas, 'The women and children turning to Europe', *UNHCR UK*, available at: {<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2016/3/573c653e4/women-children-turning-europe.html>} accessed 12 January 2019.

²⁰ Jane Freedman, 'Engendering security at the borders of Europe: Women migrants and the mediterranean "crisis"', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 29:4 (2016), pp. 568-82, p.568.

²¹ Pickering and Cochrane 2012 cited in Freedman, 'Engendering security', p.570.

²² Jane Freedman, 'Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: A hidden aspect of the refugee "crisis"', *Reproductive Health Matters*, 24:47 (2016), pp. 18-26.

²³ UNHCR, UNFPA, and Women's Refugee Commission, 'Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis: Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia',

conditions of insecurity, as they have committed gender-based violence against displaced women, which has been met with little action at national or EU level.²⁴

The violence and insecurity experienced by forcibly displaced women partly stem from serious shortcomings in the implementation of gender-sensitive refugee and asylum policies, as reported by scholars and human rights agencies. These include inadequate housing conditions at reception centres, particularly insufficient provision of gender-segregated sleeping, hygiene, and recreation facilities. Thus, when visiting an overcrowded refugee reception centre in Greece in the summer of 2018, a group of researchers was surprised to discover a pile of discarded water bottles filled with urine.²⁵ Their guide informed them that asylum-seekers residing in the centre – particularly women and girls – were using water bottles as makeshift toilets to avoid leaving their tent at night and exposing themselves to kidnapping and sexual assault. While it was possible for a woman to ask to be moved to a safe zone, this could only happen once she had already experienced violence on site.²⁶ This anecdote points to a broader cluster of

available at: {http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/EuropeMission_Protection_Risks_19_Jan_Final_0.pdf} accessed 29 January 2018, p.7.

²⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Monthly Data Collection on the Current Migration Situation in the EU', available at: {<https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/asylum-migration-borders/overviews/focus-gender-based-violence>} accessed 23 January 2020.

²⁵ Amanda Russell Beattie, Patrycja Rozbicka, and Gemma Bird, 'We must open our eyes to the injustices facing child refugees', *HuffPost UK*, available at: {https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/child-refugees_uk_5b503e8fe4b0fd5c73c24176} accessed 12 January 2019.

²⁶ Russell Beattie, Rozbicka, and Bird, 'We must open our eyes'.

problems that cultivate insecurity amongst women refugees, including policies delaying or hampering family and spousal reunification; inadequate mechanisms for reporting sexual and domestic violence; and an alarming lack of state-led data gathering on gender-based violence.²⁷

The reported insecurity of refugee women and girls fleeing conflict suggests that prevalent understandings of the conflict-affected woman should be broadened in two ways to better attend to the gendered impacts of displacement. First, while WPS policy has often attached conflict-affectedness to geographic zones understood as areas marked by conflict, this alternative reading suggests that conflict-affectedness also attaches to people on the move. This understanding emerges from a place of attention to the long-term impact of war in the country of origin on women displaced by conflict. As explained by Allami in her speech, forced displacement is an important and frequent consequence of war for women. Fleeing, while often necessary to escape death, generates intense insecurity for displaced populations. It exposes them to the problems of homelessness including unreliable and inconsistent access to water and food, shelter from the elements, and healthcare, not to mention dangerous travel routes, in environments marked by scarcity and uncertainty.

²⁷ Freedman, 'Sexual and gender-based violence'; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Monthly Data Collection'.

As Allami mentions, those who flee conflict also carry physical and/or emotional trauma from the violence that they have witnessed or experienced,²⁸ a trauma often sustained or worsened by the very circumstances of displacement. The physical and psychological wounds of war are not necessarily dissipated by migration. They often accompany survivors to their new place of dwelling, however remote from the conflict zone. Activists addressing a privileged audience, like Allami at the Security Council, will often draw on notions of trauma that emphasize the impact of a single event on an individual, such as the violent destruction of one's village. Such notions of trauma nonetheless rely on the assumption that people primarily experience life-threatening insecurity during punctual events. In contrast, forcibly displaced women experience insecurity on a chronic basis. This chronic insecurity is in itself traumatic, as argued by feminists from the Global South, for whom event-based notions of trauma are Western-centric. For displaced women, the daily struggle for food, water, and safety is often a greater challenge to the psyche than isolated events such as rape or the murder of a loved one, however damaging on their own terms.²⁹

Although displaced people of all genders experience intense hardship, gender mediates the security risks involved in forced displacement. Travelling alone, or without male kin,

²⁸ United Nations, 'Transcript', p.8.

²⁹ Aisha Fofana Ibrahim, 'Connecting testimony, trauma, and memory: The Sierra Leone experience', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 44:2 (2009), pp. 249-71.

can be stigmatizing for women in contexts where a woman's social standing is reliant on her ties to a family or kinship group. This stigma in turn can make her vulnerable to violence, including sexual violence. This, in turn, can lead to pregnancies at moments when women are unlikely to receive appropriate reproductive care. If we take into account these various and gendered forms of insecurity involved in women's experiences of conflict-induced forced displacement, we may understand conflict-affectedness as a characteristic that attaches itself to bodies and human lives. In this new understanding, conflict-affectedness is a condition that extends to women fleeing war to seek refuge away from their country of origin, including in countries not traditionally understood as in conflict. This would notably include women who have flown conflict and are seeking refuge in Europe.

Second, an attentiveness to the forms of militarized violence at Europe's borders gives cause to reconsider what counts as conflict, and where women are conflict-affected. WPS policy typically relies on a conventional notion of conflict as 'the use of armed force between two parties'.³⁰ This notion can however be productively broadened to include forms of violence and insecurity experienced by marginalised subjects outside the context of 'war' conventionally defined.³¹ In the last decade, Europe has fortified itself

³⁰ Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 'Definitions', available at: {<https://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/>} accessed 2 October 2019.

³¹ Tarak Barkawi, 'Decolonising war', *European Journal of International Security*, 1:2 (2016), pp. 199-214.

to wage what some have called a war against immigration.³² European rhetoric on border control has become militarised, referring to a combat against a ‘territorial invasion’.³³ The related material militarisation of border regimes has led to what resembles a military confrontation, albeit one in which European armed border guards oppose mostly unarmed and impoverished migrants who find themselves much more vulnerable to injury and death.³⁴ At least 36,570 migrants and refugees died at Europe’s borders between 1993 and 2019³⁵ and an estimated 8,793 migrants died at sea in 2015-2016 alone.³⁶ As the vast majority of the deceased come from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, fortress Europe has been described as waging a war marked by ‘the utter disposability of black and brown lives’.³⁷ Thus, women who flee Syria, Afghanistan, or other war zones and attempt to enter Europe may be understood as doubly affected by conflict: in the country of origin and at the border. Conventional notions of conflict as temporally contained event or geographically static condition are insufficient to thinking seriously about how refugee women are affected by conflict across time and location. In

³² Matthew Carr, *Fortress Europe: Inside the War Against Immigration* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2015), p.5.

³³ William Walters, ‘Imagined migration world: The European Union’s anti-illegal immigration discourse,’ in Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud (eds), *The Politics of International Migration Management* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 73-95.

³⁴ Carr, *Fortress Europe*, p.5; Löffmann and Vaughan-Williams, ‘Vernacular imaginaries’, p.388.

³⁵ UNITED, ‘About the ‘List of Deaths’’, available at: {<http://unitedagainstrefugeedeaths.eu/about-the-campaign/about-the-united-list-of-deaths/>} accessed 20 March 2020.

³⁶ European Parliament, ‘EU Migrant Crisis: Facts and Figures’, available at: {<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170629STO78630/eu-migrant-crisis-facts-and-figures.>} accessed 29 January 2018.

³⁷ Nicholas De Genova, ‘The “migrant crisis” as racial crisis: do Black Lives Matter in Europe?’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41:10 (2018), pp. 1765-82, p.1779.

contrast, thinking about the ‘conflict-affected woman on the move’ affords the conceptual flexibility required, and continues broader feminist efforts to rethink what counts as ‘war’ and ‘conflict’ from the perspective of women’s lived experiences.³⁸

Asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to violence and death because they occupy a liminal and insecure space that resembles Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of the *borderland*: ‘a vague and undetermined place ... in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants’.³⁹ This borderland refers not only to their geopolitical location at Europe’s borders, it is also produced by the marginality of gender to asylum processes. Conflict-affected women remain stuck in the borderland for several reasons. Gender-specific forms of vulnerability (such as the threat of sexual assault) are often not recognised by gender-blind asylum laws and policies.⁴⁰ Moreover, in countries like the United Kingdom, the closing down of borders involves delays in family

³⁸ Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, ‘Introduction: Gender and conflict in a global context,’ in Wenona Mary Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (eds), *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 3-23, p.6; see also Cynthia Cockburn, ‘The continuum of violence: A gender perspective on war and peace,’ in Wenona Mary Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (eds), *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 24-44; Chris J. Cuomo, ‘War is not just an event: Reflections on the significance of everyday violence’, *Hypatia*, 11:4 (1996), pp. 30-45.

³⁹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, p.25.

⁴⁰ Jane Freedman, ‘Women Seeking Asylum’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10:2 (2008), pp. 154-72; Lucy Hall, ‘WPS, Migration, and Displacement,’ in Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 643-56.

reunification.⁴¹ Many women whose husbands and partners have immigrated are left behind if not abandoned, leaving them isolated, impoverished, and more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. For these reasons, the conflict-affected woman on the move is vulnerable to many forms of violence and trauma. She is akin to Anzaldúa's border woman in the poem that opened this section: on a thin edge of barbwire.

However, and as many WPS activists and femocrats keenly emphasise, conflict-affected women are also creative, ingenious, and agentic human beings who have both the capacity and the right to productively contribute to security policy-making – including after they flee to a foreign country. In her speech, Allami insisted that 'women must fully participate and be consulted systematically in decision-making, across all displacement settings, in humanitarian programming, and, of course, in the broader political, security and peace processes'.⁴² This intervention builds on a well-anchored concern with women's political participation in the WPS context, where women's rights activists have successfully established a representation of the woman-in-conflict 'as someone who is empowered and not simply a victim'.⁴³ Ever since its inception, the WPS agenda has not only advocated an increased protection of women's human rights, but also women's

⁴¹ Amnesty International UK et al., 'Syria Response Consultations on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security', available at: {<http://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Syria-NAP-Consultations-report.pdf>} accessed 25 June 2018.

⁴² United Nations, 'Transcript', p.9., emphasis added

⁴³ Cook, 'The "woman-in-conflict"', p.371; see also Jennifer Thomson, 'The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and Feminist Institutionalism: A Research Agenda', *International Studies Review*, 21:4 (2018), pp. 598-613.

participation in all matters relating to peace and security and the inclusion of women in conflict prevention. By pairing protection with participation, the WPS agenda contains the demand that women are seen as subjects capable of agency – that is, as subjects able to critically reflect and act on their conditions.⁴⁴ In this sense, the WPS agenda provides the grounds for recognising, as feminist theorising on agency insists we should, that agency and coercion are not mutually exclusive conditions, but rather exist simultaneously, in complex relation to one another.⁴⁵ Agency can coexist with vulnerability and oppression; the need for protection does not substitute the right to participation.

This approach is markedly distinct from existing gender provisions in refugee law, and asylum and migration policy, including in the European context. The latter have historically exhibited a tendency to depoliticise women by limiting recognition of their political agency to that enacted by male relatives.⁴⁶ Consequently, whenever traditional refugee policy and legal texts consider women, it frames them as passive victims. Similarly, the European media has often framed women refugees as voiceless and

⁴⁴ Albeit recognizing that such action may be constrained. See for example, Sumi Madhok, 'Action, agency, coercion: Reformatting agency for oppressive contexts,' in Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson (eds), *Gender, Agency, and Coercion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 102-21; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴⁵ Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson, 'Introduction,' in Sumi Madhok, Anne Phillips, and Kalpana Wilson (eds), *Gender, Agency, and Coercion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 1-13, p.3; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), p.3.

⁴⁶ Hall, 'WPS, Migration, and Displacement,' p.4; see also Freedman, 'Women Seeking Asylum'.

victimized.⁴⁷ The weight of these cultural representations is such that even after Allami had enjoined Member States and leading security organisations to ensure the full protection, *participation and consultation* of women on peace and security matters ‘across *all* displacement settings’, the NGO and diplomatic community embraced first and foremost the objective of better protecting refugee women.⁴⁸ Several diplomats highlighted actions taken by their country to open up their domestic asylum policies and processes, while others reaffirmed the principles of international protection of asylum seekers.⁴⁹ In 2016, the NGO Working Group on WPS requested, on behalf of 253 civil society organizations from around the world, that Member States ‘implement effective asylum and legal *protection* mechanisms in accordance with international law; remove gender discriminatory nationality laws; and *protect* women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence while in transit and in final destinations’.⁵⁰ This shows how difficult it is even for activists to find language that supports a view of women refugees as agentic and worthy of political inclusion – this language simply does not exist in the existing legal framework around asylum and refugees.

⁴⁷ Gray and Franck, ‘Refugees as/at risk’, p.283.

⁴⁸ United Nations, ‘Transcript’, p.9. Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ United Nations, ‘Transcript’, pp.27, 41-2, 48, 72, 79.

⁵⁰ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security ‘Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the UN: Recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)’, available at: {<http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/open-letter-unsc-wps-anniversary-october-2016/>} accessed 25 June 2018.

In contrast, the WPS agenda's existing figure of the conflict-affected woman is simultaneously vulnerable and agentic. This, we argue, is the key distinctive advantage of WPS over migration and asylum policy. In spite of all its imperfections and shortcomings at the implementation level, the WPS agenda contains a core commitment to recognizing and promoting conflict-affected women's agency and participation, a commitment that may now be extended to conflict-affected on the move. The NGO Working Group for WPS accomplished a new push in this direction in 2017, when it nominated the Danish activist Mina Jaf to address the Security Council on its behalf. Jaf was born a refugee in Iraqi Kurdistan. She came into the world as her mother escaped a chemical attack launched on her village in the context of the war between Iran and Iraq. When Jaf was 14, her family was granted asylum in Denmark. At the time of her allocation, Jaf had grown into a young woman, and the funder and leader of a non-governmental organisation that supports women refugees and provides gender training to personnel who work with refugees in several European countries.⁵¹ Jaf's allocation at the Security Council emphasized both victimhood, through the narration of her flight from a warzone as a girl, and agency, in the form of her current leadership role in refugee action. By making visible women like Jaf, the NGO Working Group on WPS is

⁵¹ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, 'Statement by Ms. Mina Jaf at UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict', available at: {<https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/statement-unsc-sexual-violence-open-debate-may-2017/>} accessed 20 March 2020.

productively supporting more complex representations of refugee women, and showing that they are not only victims but also active political agents.

Having established the potential benefits of an emergent re-conceptualisation, in WPS advocacy, of the conflict-affected woman as also referring to the woman who flees conflict and journeys across borders in search of increased safety, we ask, to what extent does national WPS policy construct the conflict-affected woman as a transnationally mobile subject, and with what effects? Whilst this question is of global relevance, we focus our inquiry on Europe. European states are influential actors in the field of WPS, in which they often self-present as leaders and role models. For instance, the UK proudly boasts a ‘strong domestic and international record on women and girls’ that positions it as a ‘global leader’ in the field of WPS and gender equality more generally.⁵² The Nordic states also ‘see themselves as the leaders of the WPS agenda’.⁵³ Finland for instance asserts its status as ‘a pioneer and expert of gender equality issues’.⁵⁴ European states articulate this special expertise as enabling them to lead and advise other countries or international agencies whom they support in the implementation of the WPS agenda and

⁵² Government of the UK, ‘UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018 to 2022’, available at: {<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2018-to-2022>} accessed 23 January 2020, p.1.

⁵³ Jacqui True, ‘Explaining the global diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 307-23, p.313.

⁵⁴ Government of Finland, ‘Finland's National Action Plan 2012-2016’, available at: {http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/finland_nap_2012.pdf} accessed 23 January 2020, p.11.

in developing their own action plans.⁵⁵ Whilst positioning themselves as trendsetters, European states have addressed forced displacement in national action plans (NAPs) on WPS with uneven levels of enthusiasm and thoroughness. In the UK, academics and NGOs were notably unsuccessful in advocating the inclusion of provisions regarding facilitated family reunification, expanded resettlement programs, and the sensitization of hosting communities in the UK's most recent NAP.⁵⁶

This reluctance exposes a tension between the normative commitment of the WPS agenda to protect and include conflict-affected women in matters pertaining to international security on the one hand, and the geopolitical imaginaries on which WPS policy is built on the other hand. WPS policy frameworks have been ostensibly designed to make the needs and concerns of conflict-affected women visible and politically salient

⁵⁵ Laura J. Shepherd, 'Making war safe for women? National action plans and the militarisation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 324-35, p.332; see also Rahel Kunz and Julia Maisenbacher, 'Women in the neighbourhood: Reinstating the European Union's civilising mission on the back of gender equality promotion?', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:1 (2015), pp. 122-44. See for example, Government of Finland, 'Women, Peace and Security: Finland's national action plan 2018-2021', available at: {<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-281-327-5>} accessed 23 January 2020, p.59; Government of Belgium, 'Women, Peace and Security: Belgian National Action Plan on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325', available at: {<http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Belgium%20NAP%201325%202013-2016%20EN.pdf>} accessed 29 January 2018, p.26; Government of Germany, 'Action Plan of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period 2017 – 2020', available at: {<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/286988/2462039ccaa1326a195da2e962048596/170111-aktionsplan-1325-data.pdf>} accessed 23 January 2020, p.20.

⁵⁶ LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security 'UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security: Consultation Response', available at: {<http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2017/LSEWPS-UKNAP-2017.pdf>} accessed 25 June 2018; Amnesty International UK et al., 'Syria Response'; Government of the UK, 'NAP 2018-2022'.

and European governments have overwhelmingly endorsed those frameworks. Those governments are ready to voice support and dedicate resources to protect and include the conflict-affected woman when she is in the zone of conflict. Once the same conflict-affected woman moves towards Europe, their support is withdrawn, leading to an apparent normative inconsistency. As we interrogate this tension, we, the authors, also interrogate our own practices as academics who were once practitioners involved in designing and implementing WPS policy in an international foundation based in Europe. Conflict-affected women on the move were not, so to say, on our radar back then, and this seemed natural. We hereby document new efforts to include displaced women in WPS discourse, but also interrogate what the terms of inclusion (and of exclusion) reveal about the foundations of this discourse.

Methodology: Investigating the borderlands of WPS policy

Our inquiry proceeds through a content and discourse analysis of WPS policy, as articulated in NAPs and regional action plans. The content analysis allows us to trace, quantitatively, how often questions of forced displacement arise in WPS policy and which actors are most likely to include forced displacement as a concern. We worked with three datasets: 1) a global dataset of 55 national action plans (assembled in 2016); 2) a more up to date European dataset of 22 national action plans (assembled in 2018); and 3) a global dataset of 5 regional action plans (assembled in 2018). The first dataset,

produced by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), includes all mentions of forced displacement found in the 55 NAPs on WPS available in 2016 in English or French. A NAP is found to mention forced displacement when it contains any of the following 11 terms: asylum, displace(d/ment), IDP(s), migrant(s), migration, on the move, refuge(es), stateless(ness), flee, border, and returnee.⁵⁷ These mentions relate to different legal migratory categories, but we use the term ‘refugee’ in a generic sense, referring to persons seeking refuge.⁵⁸ As we are especially interested in the content of European NAPs, we produced a second, more up to date dataset containing the most recent NAP of each European country that ever adopted such a document, i.e. 22 NAPs adopted between 2007 and 2018 (see Figure 1). We searched these NAPs for the same 11 keywords related to forced displacement, thus reproducing the UNHCR approach for a more up to date set of NAPs.

We primarily focus on NAPs because they are commonly regarded as the major mechanism of policy diffusion for the WPS agenda, and one which allows us to trace how the normative framework on WPS has evolved globally.⁵⁹ The vast majority of NAPs are adopted as government policy. Sometimes a single ministry (typically Foreign

⁵⁷ UNHCR, ‘National action plans (NAPs) on UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security: extracts and analysis of text on forced displacement and statelessness’, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016).

⁵⁸ Similarly to Penny Green and Mike Grewcock, ‘The war against illegal immigration: State crime and the construction of a European identity’, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 14:1 (2002), pp. 87-101.

⁵⁹ True, ‘Explaining the global diffusion’; Mona Lena Krook and Jacqui True, ‘Rethinking the life cycles of international norms: The United Nations and the global promotion of gender equality’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 18:1 (2010), pp. 103-27.

Affairs) will be in charge of designing the NAP; sometimes the NAP receives input from several ministries (such as Defence, Cooperation and Development, Internal Security, and/or Immigration). Parliament will often be consulted either as the NAP is being developed, or following its adoption, to provide oversight over its implementation. Despite variations from state to state, all NAPs benefit from the authority, influence, and resources associated with the state. They give us information about how state agents imagine their own identity and follow a similar template that helpfully allows for comparison. Like states, regional organisations also adopt action plans on WPS. Our third dataset includes action plans of five regional organizations (the EU, NATO, the Economic Community of West African States, the Pacific States, and the League of Arab States), which allowed us to compare the EU action plan with other regional action plans, and check whether tendencies at the state level were also reflected at the regional level.

Our content analysis started with a keyword search for forced displacement issues in datasets 2 (European NAPs 2018) and 3 (Regional Action Plans 2018). We employed the same keyword search developed by UNHCR for dataset 1, mentioned above. This allowed us to assess, first of all, which nation states and regional organizations attend to the conflict-affected woman on the move. Second, for all documents that coded positive in this first step, we examined whether they framed forced displacement as a) a domestic issue; b) a foreign issue or c) both a foreign and domestic issue. This analysis of WPS policy documents provides a quantitative transnational comparison that allows us to map

the extent to which Europe includes forced displacement in its WPS policy and whether they do in a domestic or foreign policy context, and how it compares to the rest of the world (see Figure 2).

As a proxy for Europe, we use the European Economic Area (EEA) – the 28 EU Member States and 4 non-EU members of the European Free Trade Area (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland). While defining Europe in this way paradoxically reproduces a form of bordering, the EEA is the best proxy as it is productive of the European border regime.⁶⁰ In providing for the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital within the single market, it produces a relaxation of border controls within its area, while simultaneously producing a hardening of external borders, thereby constituting what is experienced as ‘fortress Europe’ by those who seek to enter it. Since the fortressing of borders is also salient in non-European countries such as Australia and the USA, we compare trends in Europe thus defined to trends in the Global North. We use membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)⁶¹ as an imperfect proxy for distinguishing Global North and Global South countries.

⁶⁰ Eleonore Kofman and Rosemary Sales, ‘Towards fortress Europe?’, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15:1 (1992), pp. 29-39.

⁶¹ OECD, also known as 'a club of rich countries', Buttonwood, ‘What is the OECD?’, *The Economist*, available at: {<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/07/05/what-is-the-oecd>} accessed 23 January 2020.

We then proceed to a poststructuralist discourse analysis of forced displacement in European WPS policy, including dataset 2 and the EU regional action plan. Using discourse analysis allows us to map how European WPS policy constructs the conflict-affected woman on the move, and what logics (or rationales) underlie either her inclusion or exclusion from WPS policy frameworks. First, we scrutinize how WPS policy defines her as a subject (e.g. as passive victim or active agent; as residing within and/or outside Europe). Second, we attend to how these documents imagine the relationship between European governments and the conflict-affected woman on the move, particularly whether this relationship is based on political participation and/or protection – two central pillars of WPS. Third, we consider how the construction of both the conflict-affected woman on the move and the national self either fixes or troubles conventional constructions of European identity and the imagined border between Europe and the rest of the world.

Poststructuralist discourse analysis has often been used to expose the mutually constitutive and socially constructed character of hierarchical binaries that are otherwise taken for granted as common sense categories.⁶² We are particularly interested in the domestic/foreign binary, and how it connects to two other binaries: peaceful/violent, and

⁶² Joan Wallach Scott, 'Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: Or, the uses of post-structuralist theory for feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 14:1 (1988), pp. 32-50, p.37.

gender-progressive/patriarchal.⁶³ As we will show, these binaries structure Europe's WPS policy in relation to forced displacement in a way that sustains unequal power structures of world politics. In a fashion typical of discourse analysis, we challenge their supposed fixity to explore alternative possibilities.⁶⁴ In so doing, we draw inspiration from Anzaldúa's call to cultivate *mestiza* consciousness, a border thinking that involves cultivating a tolerance for ambiguity through 'a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness'.⁶⁵

Logics of inclusion: Refugees as a domestic concern in Europe's National Action Plans

Our first and most important finding is that an important minority of European states do include the conflict-affected woman on the move within their WPS policy frameworks, and explicitly construct her as a subject of concern even after she leaves the war zone and journeys towards or within Europe. As many as nine European countries, or 41% of European countries with a NAP, include obligations regarding refugees who are within and at their borders in their WPS policy (see Figure 1). Some action plans emphasize the novelty of including refugee women in Europe within the remit of WPS and justify this change on the basis of the recent crises in the Mediterranean area. Thus, the government

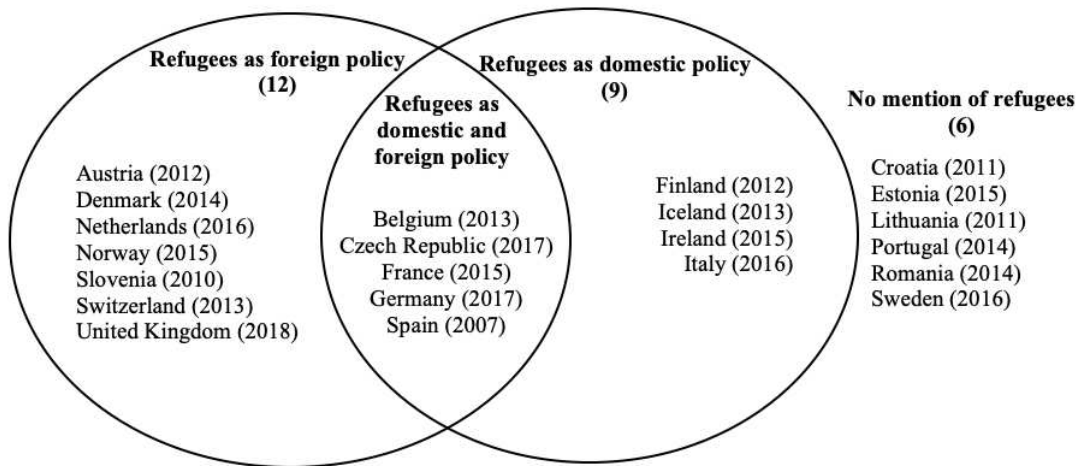
⁶³ Similarly to Shepherd, 'Making war safe', p.332.

⁶⁴ See for example, Kunz and Maisenbacher, 'Women in the neighbourhood', p.125; Barkawi, 'Decolonising war'.

⁶⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, p.102.

of Finland now considers that ‘the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and the refugee crisis affecting Europe have made the themes discussed within the framework of Women, Peace and Security topical issues for European countries’, including in ‘sectors where domestic actors operate’.⁶⁶

Figure 1. Mentions of refugees in European National Action Plans (n=22, 2018)*



*The following European countries did not have a NAP as of 2018: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, and Slovakia.

The logics that underlie the inclusion of displaced women in Europe within the WPS policy of these nine countries pertain to two pillars of the WPS agenda: participation of

⁶⁶ Government of Finland, ‘NAP 2018-2021’, p.10; Government of Spain, ‘II Plan nacional de acción de mujeres, paz y seguridad 2017-2023’, available at: {http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/Multimedia/Publicaciones/Documents/2017_II%20PLAN%20NACIONAL%20ESP%20web.pdf} accessed 23 January 2020.

women in peace and security decision-making and protection from GBV. We start with participation. Some NAPs recommend the integration of women as border guards and other professionals attached to the reception of asylum seekers.⁶⁷ The presence of women in these positions can contribute to a safer environment for women and girls asylum seekers, for instance in the conduct of body searches, health checks, or the provision of advice through helplines.⁶⁸ The concern for participation also sometimes usefully extends to the inclusion of women asylum seekers in decision-making and policy review, whereas others articulate a broader concern to engage civil society organisations, particularly those representing the interests of refugee, migrant, and diaspora women.⁶⁹ This concern with the participation and empowerment of conflict-affected women living in Europe mirrors similar provisions for supporting women refugees in developing countries, for instance by enhancing their economic situation and furthering their participation in decision-making.⁷⁰

Participation is the area where a WPS approach allows for the most innovation in comparison to existing migration and refugee regimes. The aforementioned prescriptions in WPS policy exceed the protection-focused commitments of refugee law and asylum

⁶⁷ Government of Finland, 'NAP 2018-2021', p.40.

⁶⁸ Ines Keygnaert et al., *Senperforito Frame of Reference for Prevention of SGBV in the European Reception and Asylum Sector* (Ghent: Magelaan cvba, 2010); Angela Mackay, *Border Management and Gender*, ed. Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek, Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit, (Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW, 2008).

⁶⁹ Government of Germany, 'NAP 2017-2020', pp.17, 22.

⁷⁰ Government of Finland, 'NAP 2018-2021', pp.54-5.

regimes, as they also include a participatory dimension. Civil society organisations have been at the forefront of developing such a focus on the empowerment, inclusion, and consultation of refugee women in Europe. In Ireland, AkiDwA, an organization advocating on behalf of migrant women, lobbied for the inclusion of migrant women in Defence and Police Forces, funding for programmes that would connect diaspora women from armed conflict zones who now live in Ireland, and education opportunities.⁷¹ Ireland's NAP has taken some of these recommendations on board.⁷² This example demonstrates the possibility of policy frameworks seeing the conflict-affected woman on the move as not only a vulnerable person in need of protection, but also as an agentic actor in possession of relevant knowledge to inform policymaking.⁷³ Such inclusion, in the NAPs of countries like Ireland and Germany,⁷⁴ foresees collaborative deliberation with refugee women on their needs and priorities, and thereby creates possibilities for refugee women to participate in the formulation of policies which affect them.⁷⁵

⁷¹ AkiDwa, 'Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security', available at: {<http://akidwa.ie/irelands-second-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security/>} accessed 25 June 2018.

⁷² Government of Ireland, 'Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2015-2018', available at: {[http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Revised%20NAP%20Ireland%20\(2015-2018\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Revised%20NAP%20Ireland%20(2015-2018).pdf)} accessed 23 January 2020.

⁷³ Shepherd, 'Making war safe', p.332.

⁷⁴ Government of Germany, 'NAP 2017-2020', pp.17, 22.

⁷⁵ This echoes an understanding of 'participation as deliberation', already present in other aspects of the WPS agenda. Thomson, 'The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and Feminist Institutionalism: A Research Agenda', p.604; see also Catherine O'Rourke, "'Walk[ing] the halls of power?'" Understanding women's participation in international peace and security', *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, 15:1 (2014), pp. 128-54.

European NAPs nonetheless remain more likely to invoke the need to *protect* refugee women and girls from GBV as a leading rationale for their inclusion within WPS policy. The NAPs identify different phases of the asylum process in which the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls are to be considered, from the handling of asylum requests and the design of reception policies and infrastructures to resettlement and integration programmes. For example, the French NAP commits to increasing the ‘consideration of issues linked to gender and violence against women in asylum procedures’.⁷⁶ Belgium’s NAP details measures taken to ensure that women who seek asylum in Belgium benefit from gender-sensitive policies, including with regard to accommodation, health, and resettlement in Belgium.⁷⁷ Some NAPs also outline measures related to staffing, such as gender training for professionals involved in service provision to asylum seekers.⁷⁸ This emphasis on protection legitimately draws attention to the insecurity of asylum seekers at the borders of Europe.

⁷⁶ Government of France, ‘France’s second national action plan: Implementation of the United Nations Security Council ‘Women, Peace and Security’ resolutions 2015-2018’, available at: {<http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/2014-2016%20WPS%20NAP%20France.pdf>} accessed 5 April 2017, p.20.

⁷⁷ Government of Belgium, ‘NAP 2013-2016’, p.7.

⁷⁸ Government of France, ‘NAP 2015-2018’, p.20; Government of Belgium, ‘NAP 2013-2016’, p.7; Government of the Czech Republic, ‘The Action Plan of the Czech Republic to implement Security Council Resolution UN Security Council no. 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and related resolutions for the years 2017 - 2020’, available at: {<http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2019/NAP/NAPCzech-Republic2017.pdf>} accessed 23 January 2020, p.25.

We suggest, however, that the inclusion of refugees in WPS policy should emphasize *both* protection *and* participation of displaced women in decision-making. As feminists have pointed out, the exclusion of certain agents (in this case, refugees) from a space ‘exposes the need for a power shift’, but inclusion is not always in and of itself sufficient to bring about such a power shift. Inclusion sometimes only allows ‘a partial renegotiation of the gendering and racing power’.⁷⁹ In the case of WPS policy, an inclusion of refugee women that solely focuses on protection does not favor reciprocal relations between refugee women and European states. It repositions European states as protective heroes and conflict-affected women as helpless victims. For example, the Czech NAP stresses that women and girl migrants are among the most vulnerable groups, and therefore in need of special protection. This in turn calls for the state to take measures to prevent trafficking, GBV, and gender-based exclusion.⁸⁰ Such measures are certainly necessary. However, a sole focus on protection at the expense of participation negates refugee women’s capacity and right to shape their own conditions of living and to participate in decision-making on security matters. It reproduces a common stereotype of suffering, helplessness, and oppression that negates the complex and diverse sets of

⁷⁹ Zillah Eisenstein, *Sexual Decoys: Gender, Race and War in Imperial Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2007), p.94.

⁸⁰ Government of the Czech Republic, ‘NAP 2017-2020’, pp.21, 23, 25, 27, 28.

experiences, skills, and capacities of conflict-affected women on the move – a stereotype also often extended to LGBTQ refugees from Syria.⁸¹

An inclusion of refugee women in WPS policy that solely emphasizes protection measures also problematically reasserts Europe’s position as the competent, willing, and heroic protector of both white and brown women.⁸² This framing obscures the responsibility or complicity of European states in creating some of the insecurity experienced by women and girl refugees in the first place.⁸³ Most strikingly, none of the NAPs mention the well-established need to introduce and enforce codes of conduct to prevent sexual harassment and abuse by border guards and other security practitioners interacting with refugees, or ensure the functioning and integrity of complaints mechanisms designed to report such cases.⁸⁴ While the Spanish NAP commits to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse among security personnel deployed abroad, it curiously does not extend the scope of this policy to personnel working with asylum seekers at the domestic level.⁸⁵ Nor did we find commitments to

⁸¹ Fadi Saleh, ‘Queer/Humanitarian visibility: The emergence of the figure of the suffering Syrian gay refugee’, *Middle East Critique*, 29:1 (2020), pp. 47-67.

⁸² Holmes and Castañeda, ‘Representing the “European refugee crisis”’, p.19; Sara R. Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

⁸³ As also observed in the case of ‘compassionate borderwork’ identified by Little and Vaughan-Williams, ‘Stopping boats’, p.542.

⁸⁴ Ines Keygnaert et al., ‘Sexual and gender-based violence in the European asylum and reception sector: A perpetuum mobile?’, *European Journal of Public Health*, 25:1 (2015), pp. 90-96; Mackay, *Border Management*, p.9.

⁸⁵ Government of Spain, ‘NAP 2017-2023’, p.31.

revise legal frameworks on the situation of refugee women who hold visas based on their spouse's refugee status, and whose ability to press charges against an abusive spouse is compromised by their fear of losing their right to remain in the host country.⁸⁶

Interestingly, Spain and Italy both recognize European *society* as a potential threat to refugees. The former mandates public information campaigns on refugee integration, and the latter requests the monitoring of hate crimes directed at women refugees.⁸⁷ These policies thus recognize that refugee women and girls may sometimes face insecurity *coming from within Europe*. While these NAPs reposition European *governments* as protecting refugees against misguided elements of the host population, they productively trouble the assumption that violent threats against conflict-affected women emanate exclusively or primarily from outside Europe. The next section examines this assumption, which partly underlies some states' decision to exclude the women forcibly displaced in Europe from their WPS framework.

Logics of exclusion: Refugees as a foreign policy concern in Europe's National Action Plans

⁸⁶ Karen McVeigh, 'Abusive men "using immigration fears to control women"', *The Guardian*, available at: {<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/02/abusive-men-using-uk-immigration-fears-to-control-women>} accessed 25 June 2018.

⁸⁷ Government of Spain, 'NAP 2017-2023', p.21; Government of Italy, 'Italy's Third National Action Plan, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), 2016-2019', available at: {[http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/49123_f_PlanofAction132520162019%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/49123_f_PlanofAction132520162019%20(1).pdf)} accessed 25 June 2018, pp.20-1.

In the majority of European action plans, refugee women in Europe or at its borders remain absent and invisible. Out of 22 NAPs in Europe, 13 remain silent on the violence experienced by forcibly displaced women in Europe, such as incarceration, sexual violence in refugee centres, and/or deportation back to the war zones that they have escaped. Similarly, the EU Action Plan does not address these policy failures and implementation gaps in domestic migration and asylum frameworks. The key rationale for omitting forced displacement in or near Europe from WPS policies is the idea that WPS is a foreign policy area. For example, successive iterations of the British NAP have specified: ‘this National Action Plan is focused overseas,’ and ‘the NAP is internationally focused’.⁸⁸ During a consultation with academics in August 2017, UK government representatives reasserted this position: the NAP is a foreign policy document focused on ‘conflict-affected states’.⁸⁹ The UK government has long supported the idea that the WPS framework has no domestic implication, including in Northern Ireland. This position contrasts with that of feminist academics and women’s rights activists, who understand Northern Ireland as a site of conflict, and one in which women continue to be sidelined despite their mobilisation for peace.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Government of the UK, ‘United Kingdom National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2014-2017’, available at: {[http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UK%20Revised%20NAP%20\(2014-2017\).pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UK%20Revised%20NAP%20(2014-2017).pdf)} accessed 6 April 2017, p.9; Government of the UK, ‘NAP 2018-2022’, p.24.

⁸⁹ Informal exchange with attendee, London, 20 June 2018.

⁹⁰ Sahla Aroussi, ‘National action plans on Women, Peace and Security as tools of foreign policy: Reconsidering gender security in the west’, in Sahla Aroussi (ed.), *Rethinking National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security* (IOS Press, 2017), pp. 29-40, p.34.

The UK identifies refugees as a population of concern in ‘focus countries’ such as South Sudan, but not at home.⁹¹ Similarly, Denmark outlines ongoing support to an NGO working with Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, but no similar activities in Denmark itself.⁹² In total, 7 NAPs address forced displacement in the Global South only (see Figure 1). Likewise, the EU’s regional action plan highlights women’s forced displacement in places like Darfur but not in Europe itself.⁹³ While pursuing this research, we have also met researchers and activists who considered that although the failures of the immigration and asylum regimes are alarming, it makes sense to address these through those existing frameworks, and preserve WPS as a foreign policy agenda.

It is nonetheless necessary to interrogate the supposed naturalness of treating WPS as foreign policy, since like all things taken to be common sense it is a social construction made natural through habit. It is first worth noting that this is a distinctly European attitude. Outside of Europe, it is very common for questions of asylum, migration, and forced displacement to be included in WPS policy, including in relation to the domestic context. Globally, 76% of NAPs mention forced displacement, compared to only 68% in

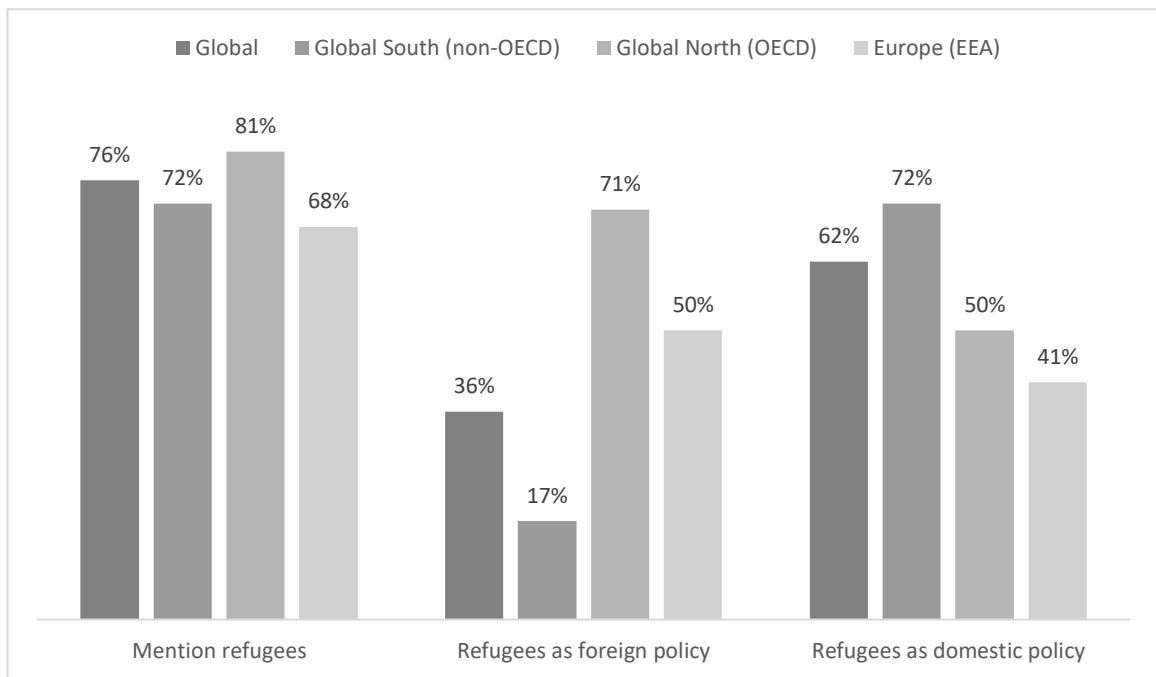
⁹¹ Government of the UK, ‘NAP 2018-2022’, p.22.

⁹² Government of Denmark, ‘Denmark’s National Action Plan for implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2014 – 2019’, available at: {<http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Denmark%20National%20Action%20Plan%202014-2019.pdf>} accessed 29 January 2018, p.15.

⁹³ Council of the European Union, ‘Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security’, available at: {http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/eu_comprehensive_eu_approach_to_the_implementation_of_unscr_1325_and_1820_december2008.pdf} accessed 9 October 2015, p.6.

European states (see Figure 2). Moreover, countries located outside of Europe more willingly address forced displacement as a domestic concern. Globally, 62% of NAPs mention refugees within, or at the borders of the host nation, compared to only 41% in Europe. Europe’s position is therefore, compared to global WPS policy, unusual and worth interrogating.

FIGURE 2. VISIBILITY OF REFUGEES IN NAPs ON WPS



We suggest that Europe’s greater tendency to treat WPS as foreign policy relies on and reproduces two problematic assumptions: that Europe is peaceful; and that Europe is gender-progressive. First, the framing of WPS as foreign policy, and thus not concerned with refugees close to home, is premised upon an understanding that WPS addresses

conflict, and that conflict is something that happens elsewhere, namely in the Global South. In Europe as more generally in the Global North, WPS policy often locates conflict outside of their national boundaries.⁹⁴ This framing mirrors the Security Council Resolutions, which circumscribe attention to refugee women to those physically located in the geographic zones of conflict on its agenda. This notion of conflict zone, actively policed by the five permanent members, borrows from tropes cultivated in media and government discourse that construct the South as less modern, less developed, and less peaceful, and links the Global North to notions of peace and security.⁹⁵ In other words, the borders of Europe generally do not appear to qualify as a conflict zone within WPS discourse because the latter is premised on a notion of conflict constructed by the permanent members of the Council to protect the sovereignty of Northern countries, particularly their own. It is largely as a result of such policing moves that the WPS agenda has imagined conflict-affected women as located in the South. This explains why only 50% of NAPs produced in the Global North mention forced displacement as a domestic issue, against 72% in the South (see Figure 2). The WPS agenda borrows from a broader security-development discourse that imagines security problems to be located

⁹⁴ Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik, and Aisling Swaine, *Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation* (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Institute for Global and Development Studies, 2014), 11, available } accessed; Shepherd, 'Making war safe', pp.331-2.

⁹⁵ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

exclusively in the South.⁹⁶ In this discourse, Northern states and actors are imagined as exporting solutions. Thus, 71% of Northern NAPs construct forced displacement as a foreign policy issue, compared to only 17% of Southern NAPs. The problem, of course, is that such a framing obscures Northern responsibilities in fostering conditions of economic inequality, authoritarianism, and environmental degradation in the South, all of which fuel conflict on a global scale.⁹⁷

Second, European WPS policy has often been premised on the assumption that Europe is already performing gender-responsive protection, which makes European countries even less likely than the rest of the Global North to acknowledge the vulnerability of forcibly displaced women on their own territory. Indeed, although 50% of NAPs produced in the Global North consider forced displacement in the domestic context, this is only the case for 41% of European NAPs. As discussed earlier, European states see themselves as global leaders in the field of women's rights.⁹⁸ Their interventions frame gender-progressiveness as a normative ideal on the world stage, which is in many ways

⁹⁶ Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism & UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2004); Roland Paris, 'International peacebuilding and the "mission civilisatrice"', *Review of International Studies*, 28:4 (2002), pp. 637-56.

⁹⁷ Tarja Väyrynen, 'Gender and UN peace operations: The confines of modernity', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:1 (2004), pp. 125-42; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Little and Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats'; Audrey Macklin, 'Like oil and water, with a match: Militarized commerce, armed conflict, and human security in Sudan,' in Wenona Mary Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (eds), *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 75-107.

⁹⁸ Kunz and Maisenbacher, 'Women in the neighbourhood'.

beneficial, as is the transnational sharing of resources and successful practices to promote gender equality objectives. This conviction is to some extent well founded. The EU and (by extension) European countries have a robust policy framework addressing gendered concerns in forced migration. Since 2015, countries like Iceland, Latvia, Croatia, and Italy have also adopted new laws mandating gender-sensitive support for asylum-seekers, gender training for security personnel working with refugees, and asylum procedures conducted by officials capable of assessing gender-specific forms of vulnerability.⁹⁹ However, on the ground, the insecurity faced by conflict-affected women at the borders of Europe reminds us that severe shortcomings remain. In such a context, framing WPS as strictly foreign policy, and excluding the conflict-affected women on the move from its remit, is a construction that mainly serves to obscure European states' failures to perform their idealized selves: the peace-loving protector of vulnerable women.

Obscuring these failures is itself a way of hardening the borders by reproducing imagined distinctions between the European self and the Southern other. As Anzaldúa theorizes, borders are not simply geographic facts; they are socially produced and politically productive, in the sense that they are 'set up to define places that are safe and unsafe, to

⁹⁹ Sarah Ferbach and Audrey Reeves, *The role of parliaments in NATO member countries in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda*, DCAF (Geneva, 2018), 13, available at: {<https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/NATO%20PA%20DCAF%202018%20Role%20of%20NATO%20Parliaments%20in%20Advancing%20WPS%20agenda.pdf>} accessed 12 January 2018.

distinguish *us* from *them*'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the notion of Europe's refugee 'crisis' does not only refer to the tragedy of lives violently uprooted and too often lost at sea, but also to the destabilisation of Europe's security imaginary and sense of self.¹⁰¹ This imaginary locates Europeans as naturally at home in the North and inversely the populations of 'developing' countries as belonging geographically in the South.¹⁰² The Southerner's movements towards and into Europe are thus understood as 'disorderly' and threatening Europe with the violence, chaos, and underdevelopment associated with the South.¹⁰³ The framing of 'crisis', therefore, has served to justify the fortressing of Europe by (re)defining the latter as a space that is developed and civilized, and therefore cannot be home to people who are perceived as still in need of development and civilization.¹⁰⁴

In this context, a European WPS discourse that fails to address forced displacement, or addresses it only in the realm of foreign policy, is harmful and must be resisted, on the grounds that it contributes to the fortressing of Europe in two ways. First, it solidifies Europe's sense of self as already at peace by obscuring the persisting gendered insecurity

¹⁰⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, p.25. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹ De Genova, 'The "migrant crisis"'.

¹⁰² Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and The Will to Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.81-2; Rafael X. Reuveny and William R. Thompson, 'The North-South divide and international studies: A symposium', *International Studies Review*, 9:4 (2007), pp. 556-64; Little and Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats', p.540.

¹⁰³ Weber, *Queer International Relations*, pp.73, 82; Green and Grewcock, 'The war', p.98.

¹⁰⁴ Holmes and Castañeda, 'Representing the "European refugee crisis"', p.114; Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.77; De Genova, 'The "migrant crisis"'.

experienced by those who flee the zone of conflict with the hope of finding asylum in Europe. As noted earlier, European states not only fail to meet women and girls' needs at Europe's borders, but often actively contribute to their insecurity by waging a war on immigration.¹⁰⁵ European policy-makers who fail to acknowledge this gap are more likely to fall into the trap of using the WPS framework to reinforce an idealized view of Europe's 'own identity and sense of self' as a gender-progressive community, while failing at making conflict-affected women a priority when policymakers feel it might harm 'European interests', as has been the case in the field of foreign policy.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, European actors may overlook lessons learned in non-European contexts of refugee protection that could be usefully applied in the handling of the refugee situation in Europe.¹⁰⁷

Second, the resulting preservation, in the shared European imaginary, of the heroic protector subjectivity 'obscures the imbrication of such powerful actors in international capitalism and many of the political-economic asymmetries that produce displacement in the first place'.¹⁰⁸ The failure to acknowledge Europe's share of responsibility for the ill-fate of displaced women feeds variants of 'femonationalism': a tendency amongst some European feminists to cultivate the notion that 'gender relations in the West are

¹⁰⁵ Freedman, 'Sexual and gender-based violence'.

¹⁰⁶ Roberta Guerrina and Katharine A. M. Wright, 'Gendering normative power Europe: Lessons of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 293-312.

¹⁰⁷ Holvikivi and Reeves, 'The WPS agenda and the 'Refugee Crisis''.

¹⁰⁸ Holmes and Castañeda, 'Representing the "European refugee crisis"', p.20.

more advanced and must be taught to Muslim women', or more generally women from the developing world.¹⁰⁹ Femonationalism cultivates unequal relationships in the international space. In the context of WPS, these beliefs often reinforce North/South hierarchies through the redeployment of colonial tropes of white protection of brown women from brown men first exposed by Gayatri Spivak.¹¹⁰ In addition, the imagination of Europe as a distinctively safe and gender-progressive space paradoxically legitimizes the fortressing of Europe against an outside imagined as unsafe and patriarchal, and thus fuels the war on immigration that maintains a growing number of women in a dangerous borderland.

Conclusion: The limits of inclusion and the road ahead

To summarise, we have shown that in nine European countries, WPS policy acknowledges the presence of conflict-affected women on the move at and within the borders of Europe. The emergence of the conflict-affected woman on the move to Europe in WPS policy and activism creates much needed entry points to better protect women forcibly displaced by conflict and, most innovatively, include them in decision-making processes. This emerging visibility of refugee women in WPS productively troubles the tendency of European states to self-present as always already reliably performing

¹⁰⁹ Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights*, p.7.

¹¹⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?,' in Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 66-111; Pratt, 'Reconceptualising gender'; Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights*.

peaceful and gender-responsive protection and inclusion. This problematic tendency remains visible in the WPS policy of thirteen European states and the EU, as they continue to omit the conflict-affected woman on the move from their WPS policy framework. This omission is enabled by the WPS framework itself, which demonstrably facilitates the reproduction of imperial hierarchies, the fortressing of Europe, and the neglect of refugee women's human security. In this context, WPS activists and policy-makers who recognise the existence of women forcibly displaced by conflict near Europe or within its borders productively trouble the imagined but de facto murky border between a gender-progressive, peaceful Europe and a patriarchal, conflict-ridden outside.

This being said, we do not expect that the inclusion of refugee women within the WPS agenda would provide a panacea to the forms of insecurity they experience. Logics of inclusion meaningfully challenge, but also sometimes paradoxically reconsolidate, the fortressing and border-making effects of Europe's WPS policy, as can be observed in European states' tendency to position themselves as heroic protectors of vulnerable refugee women. The terms of inclusion, in other words, matter as much as inclusion in the first place. To go back to Suaad Allami, whose words opened this article, the protection of displaced women should be as important as their inclusion in policy-making

and in the identification of solutions addressing ‘the root causes of conflict and displacement’.¹¹¹

We hope that evolving connections between forced displacement and WPS will remain the object of scholarly attention, and close by suggesting avenues of further research that we have not had space to explore. First, we focus in priority on the EEA as the area constitutive of fortress Europe. While such a classification has been necessary as a first step, we see potential in developing more carefully contextually informed accounts of how the silence around refugee questions is both maintained and challenged in different countries both within and beyond the EEA. Second, we have focused here on the figure of the conflict-affected woman. We are nonetheless wholly sympathetic to attempts to re-orient the focus of the agenda from women to gender, thereby allowing consideration of the gendered experiences of men and boys, as well as sexual and gender minorities.¹¹² We therefore identify possibilities for future research exploring in greater depth the intersections between gender, sexuality, race, and forms of insecurity experienced by refugees. Finally, our efforts to push the WPS community towards attention to refugee questions occur in the context of the emergent inclusion of a counter-terrorism mandate

¹¹¹ United Nations, ‘Transcript’, p.9.

¹¹² Kirby and Shepherd, ‘The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’; Jamie J. Hagen, ‘Queering Women, Peace and Security’, *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 313-32; Callum Watson, ‘Begging the question: What would a men, peace and security agenda look like?’, *Connections*, 14:3 (2015), pp. 45-60; Lewis Turner, ‘Syrian refugee men as objects of humanitarian care’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21:4 (2019), pp. 595-616.

in the WPS agenda. The militarising potential of such developments is concerning, especially in view of a predominant, politically motivated, conflation of the figures of the asylum seeker and the international terrorist.¹¹³ We therefore identify the need for continued vigilance for on what terms, and with what effects for the security and empowerment of women, refugee questions are taken up in the WPS agenda. It is crucial that these concerns are founded in a commitment to refugee women's *right to asylum and political participation*, rather than counter-terrorism.

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¹¹³ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, 'The 'war on terror' and extremism: assessing the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 275-91; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p.79.