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UNSCR 1325 DID NOT HELP WOMEN, PEACE, OR SECURITY IN
AFGHANISTAN:

THE ROLE OF MILITARISM AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract:

This paper argues that UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security exemplifies how the international security system is constructed in a way that not only preserves militarism and hegemonic masculinity, but further perpetuates gendered power disparities and exacerbates human insecurity. In this pursuit, this paper develops a theoretical framework of radical feminism to illustrate how the international arena embodies militarized hegemonic masculinity and how this power paradigm fundamentally inhibits international security organizations from successfully addressing gender issues. Additionally, this paper utilizes a case study of UNSCR 1325 and WPS implementation in Afghanistan to reveal how when international security organizations attempt to address gender issues, they do so in a way that not only fails to ameliorate the problems but allows political actors to co-opt the WPS agenda for individual gain. The case study of Afghanistan discusses how the country's current humanitarian disaster in the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 largely reflects how within the current militarized, hegemonic masculine international system, actors continue to place state security above human security and rights.

Keywords: Militarism; Hegemonic Masculinity; Feminism; Security Studies; UNSCR 1325; Afghanistan

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Introduction

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSCR 1325); the adoption of the resolution marked the United Nation's (UN) first official recognition of the link between gender equality and international peace and security. Specifically, UNSCR 1325 addresses the exorbitant impact of war and violent conflict on women and girls, highlights the critical role women should play in peace processes, and emphasizes the need to protect women and girls from sexual violence within the context of violent conflict. The resolution's recommendations are contained within four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. Many actors within the international community, including UN agencies, national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and even women's rights activists, laud UNSCR 1325 as a significant milestone in the fight for international gender equality and the promotion of peace; however, critics of UNSCR 1325 regard the resolution as predominantly symbolic and a continuation of the status quo. These critics employ radical feminist theories to argue that the resolution fails to deconstruct the dominating structures and concepts enabling war and conflict, including militarism, hegemonic masculinity, and imperialism; consequently, WPS simply adds women into the very structures whose power stems from the subjugation of femininity.

It is critical to note that the original advocates for WPS created the agenda with the goal of demilitarizing society and developing anti-militarist strategies of peace. However, the UNSC is a collective security organization that was created by and for men for the purpose of coordinating national military responses to aggression as a form of deterrent. Although the organization's purpose is "ensuring international peace and security," its mission can be restated as ensuring *peace through security.* This paper utilizes radical feminist theories pertaining to international

relations and security studies to explore the inherent tensions between international security organizations, namely the UNSC, and efforts to address gender inequality, principally the WPS framework. Specifically, this paper argues that UNSCR 1325 and WPS exemplify how the international security system is constructed in a way that not only preserves militarism and hegemonic masculinity, but further perpetuates gendered power disparities and exacerbates human insecurity.

In this pursuit, this paper will first discuss the concepts of gender, militarism, and security within the context of feminist theories before employing the perspective of radical feminism to build a theoretical framework for analyzing how militarism and hegemonic masculinity serve as the foundation of the power structures in international security. Second, this paper will use its theoretical framework to evaluate the role of militarized, hegemonic masculinity within the context of the UN, the UNSCR, and UNSCR 1325. Subsequently, this paper will assess the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS in Afghanistan to illustrates the ways in which the resolution fails to generate sustainable and structural transformations and how the WPS agenda can become instrumentalized by various political actors for individual gain. The case study of Afghanistan will discuss how the country's current humanitarian disaster in the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 largely reflects how within the current militarized, hegemonic masculine international system, actors continue to place state security above human security and rights. Overall, this paper's theoretical framework and case study coalesce in the following question, originally posed by the Malala Fund:

"How meaningful is the WPS agenda when those who endorsed its principles trade them away as…geopolitics shift?"

Theoretical Framework

This section will first examine the various ways 'feminist' approaches to international relations and security studies use gender as the primary unit of analysis before deconstructing the gendered power hierarchy that underpins every aspect of the international system. In this pursuit, this section with examine how stereotypes regarding masculinity and femininity evolved within the context of hegemonic masculinity and militarism. Lastly, this section will analyze how this male-dominant and militaristic paradigm fits within the context of security studies theories by engendering concepts such as human security vs. state security and security vs. insecurity.

Reconceptualizing Gender Within the Context of Feminist Theories

First and foremost, feminist theories do not advocate for compartmentalizing and addressing women and women's issues as "special interest group[s]" within a given field; instead, feminist theories insist on reconceptualizing gender as a unit of analysis in which constructed "gender roles and relationships" serve as the basis of "categorizing, ordering, symbolizing, and distributing power" (Theidon and Mazurana 2018). Skjelsbæk and Smith (2001) trace gendered divisions of power back to "early humans" and the "separation of life-giving and life-taking powers," in which, women's principal responsibility was "child-bearing" and "child-rearing" while men were responsible for protecting their families and communities often through "life-taking." Because of this original "sexual division of power," definitions of femininity and masculinity developed inextricably with "the honing of" traits and themes associated with "life-giving" and "life-taking;" for example, femininity entails "nurturing, gentleness," "passivity," and "long-suffering," while masculinity demands "assertiveness," "ruthlessness," "confrontation," "conquest," and "killer instinct" (Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001). Put differently, motherhood is the defining factor of womanhood while military service defines manhood.

Skjelsbæk and Smith (2001) also argue that since "life-giving" was a "one-shot event" while the threat of life-taking was unrelenting, men and masculinity harbored "authority" over women and femininity; consequently, the traits associated with masculinity became "the most desirable social values" leaving the traits associated with femininity as "less desirable" (Salla 2001).

The gendered division of power embodies a specific type of power: masculinity's *power over* femininity. *Power over* differs from other forms of power, such as *power to* or *power with*, in that it needs to be flexed to be maintained; furthermore, research contends that flexes of *power over* increase in violence and cruelty over time (Brown and O'Rourke 2022). In the context of gender, the masculine must demonstrate its capacity to dominate the feminine to reinforce its *power over*; this can be seen through practices such as exclusion from decision-making positions, control over reproduction health, and gender-based violence. Critically, *power over* also differs from other forms of power by perpetuating the belief that "power is finite;" consequently, from a gendered perspective, the masculine believes that any increase in the feminine's power will cause a corresponding decrease in the masculine's *power over* the feminine (Brown 2020).

Although most feminist approaches to international relations and security studies view gender as a division of power, there is a bifurcation between how different theories further define gender. On one hand, more traditional feminist theories tend to define gender along a strict biological binary of male versus female, while on the other hand, more radical feminist theories understand gender as a social construct based in the opposition of masculine traits with feminine traits.

Traditional feminist theories approach gender issues from the perspective of women's disadvantages, relative to men. In traditional feminist theories, gender often defaults to women. Critics of these theories base their criticisms on two main premises: first, traditional feminist theories cite disparities between men and women that are actually symptoms of the underlying

disparities between masculinities and femininities, and second, embracing traditional conceptions of gender binaries reinforces the status quo of male domination and excludes intersectional identities. For example, West and Zimmerman (1991, 24) exemplify the radical perspective of gender by declaring that "doing gender means creating differences between" "women and men" "that are not natural, essential, or biological." Skjelsbæk (2001, 2) also embraces the radical perspective, stating that "gender identity is negotiable," in the sense that "masculinity and femininity are *negotiated interpretations* of what it means to be a man or a woman."

Unlike traditional feminist theories, radical theories that assess gender through masculine and feminine dichotomies challenge the foundation of the gendered power hierarchy that dominates the international system. For these reasons, I argue that the latter approach provides a superior theoretical framework for assessing gender inequities and injustices in the international system. In this framework, masculinity and femininity are not two rigid sets of universal characteristics but rather complex and context-dependent aspects of social identities. In other words, people from different contexts, for example, certain geographic locations or religious groups, may define masculinity and femininity differently. Despite their contextual differences, varying definitions of masculinity and femininity share one fundamental commonality: "a relational status" (Åse 2018, 276). Simply, across every context, masculinity is defined by what femininity is not. That is, all forms of masculinity are "constructed in opposition to femininity" by "devalu[ing] that which is constructed as feminine" (Ibid). Skjelsbæk and Smith (2001)'s explanation of the power and authority of "life-taking" traits over "life-giving" traits exemplifies the perpetuity of the relational and hierarchical construction of masculinity and femininity throughout history.

Masculine and feminine "fixed binary oppositions" extend beyond individual character traits to more general concepts, such as "private versus public," "autonomy versus relatedness," "objective versus subjective" and so on (Tickner 1992). Furthermore, Tickner (1992) argues that the "fixed" and "permanent" nature of these "hierarchical" gender oppositions perpetuate the oppression of women and femininity.

Therefore, this paper will adopt the radical perspective in which gender is conceptualized as a division of power between traits associated with masculinity and femininity, with the masculine privileged over the feminine. Within this theoretical framework, various theories illustrate how stereotypes regarding masculinity and femininity permeate every aspect of society to create a paradigm in which "militarized," and "hegemonic" masculinity is reinforced in "hierarchal opposition" to femininity (Eichler 2014, 82).

Gendered Stereotypes and Militarism

Arguably, the most prevalent gendered stereotypes within the field of international relations are the assumptions that "men are innately militaristic" and women are innately peaceful. Skjelsbæk and Smith (2001) point out that "the universality of war" throughout "history and across cultures" as a male-dominated and even a male-exclusive "enterprise" demonstrates how the "nature of life-taking" plays a fundamental role in "defining masculinity." However, feminist scholars stress that these stereotypes are not reflective of legitimate biological differences between the sexes but rather social constructs resulting from the militarization of men and masculinity (Eichler 2014, 81).

A key component of understanding the militarization of masculinity is the concept of militarism. Shepherd (2016, 325) proposes that militarism functions as a "belief system," in which a society

views violence "through a prism of acceptance of the use of force and the valorization of military institutions" and ideologies. Simply, militarism extends the logics of war beyond the realm of "war proper" to every facet of "social and political life" (Sjoberg and Via 2010, 7). Varying degrees of militarism are present in most modern states, even during times of peace; in fact, the most widely recognized definition of the modern state comes from Max Weber's 1918 lecture, "Politics as Vocation:" a "human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Munro 2013). Eichler (2014, 81-2) argues that "state and military leaders" constructed "the link" between militarism and masculinity and maintain it "for the purposes of waging war" by promoting the idea that the socially desirable traits linked to masculinity, such as strength and bravery, are best developed and "proven through military service" (Eichler 2014, 81). Furthermore, scholars highlight that cementing the link between masculinity and militarism requires condemning stereotypical feminine traits within the context of military service (Eichler 2014; Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010).

One critical aspect of militarism is the extension of the military's reliance on "hierarchical organization" to the broader society; given that the military actively valorizes stereotypical masculine traits while condemning their feminine counterparts, imposing a military-based hierarchical structure onto all of society perpetuates the pro-masculine gendered hierarchy (Shepherd 2016, 325). Consequently, militarism cultivates a society in which the requirements for "being a real man" correspond to traits historically desired in a soldier or military leader, such as aggression, physical strength, assertiveness, and emotionless (Higate 2018, 78). The form of masculinity revered by militarism is often referred to as "militarized masculinity" (Eichler 2014, 81). Eichler (2014, 84) argues that although militarized masculinities may be

initially formed through "military practices," they are actually produced and reinforced on multiple levels including individual "beliefs and actions," "institutions" and their policies, "international organizations," and social and cultural norms. For example: "personal identities" and relationships; "education programs;" "state policies;" and security, cultural, and media discourses (Ibid). Militaristic discourses function as "an exercise of power," in which the aim is to "promote" militarized masculinity as the "dominant or hegemonic" discourse by discrediting its direct alternatives, such as, pacifism, peace, emotion, and vulnerability, i.e., traits associated with feminine discourse. (Jackson 2005, 19).

In most societies, militarized forms of masculinity represent an idealized form of masculinity that not only positions militarized masculinity as superior to femininity but also as superior to other forms of masculinity. The term "hegemonic masculinity" was pioneered by Australian sociologist R. W. Connell in the 1980s to differentiate this "culturally dominant masculinity" from "subordinated masculinities" (Connell 2009; Tickner 1992). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 831) notes that the concept of hegemonic masculinity "grew directly out of homosexual men's experiences with violence and prejudice from straight men." More generally, hegemonic masculinity emphasizes that across all cultures there is a type of masculinity that reaches "social ascendency" and requires all "men to position themselves" relative to it and authorizes the universal inferiority of all women, not through force but through "cultural consent," "institutionalization, and the marginalization" or invalidation of other masculinities and all femininities (Locke; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 846). The prevalence of militarism across the international system contributes to the cementing of militarized masculinity as the hegemonic masculinity. Tickner (1992, 6) argues that while most men do not fit the criteria for hegemonic masculinity, the ideology of the concept bolsters "patriarchal authority" and reinforces a

"patriarchal" global order. In fact, although many men do not represent hegemonic masculinity, all men still benefit from the legitimization of patriarchy; therefore, all men benefit from what Connell calls the "patriarchal dividend," the advantages all "men as a group" gain from "maintaining unequal gender order;" such as higher "income," "authority," "safety," "access to institutional power," and autonomy" (Connell 2009, 142). However, hegemonic masculinity also imposes expectations and even consequences on men or other individuals who do not fit the standard. Research shows that the perpetuation of an ideal form of masculinity imposes a "clear" and "narrow" set of expectations on men; for example, "men are expected to be leaders, tough, physically strong, dominant, unemotional and assertive" (Stanford University 2016). Furthermore, research reveals that socialization teaches children that traits outside of the hegemonic masculinity,deemed feminine, are not only "undesirable" but punishable (Ibid).

Militarism and hegemonic masculinity not only set expectations for men based on hyper-militarized notions of masculinity, but also employ specific stereotypes of femininity to position women as less capable, specifically the notions that women are innately passive and in need of protection. Given that the gender hierarchy is based on oppositional relationships, if masculinity monopolizes war and militarism, femininity naturally becomes characterized as passive and peaceful. Underlying the belief that femininity is innately peaceful is the idea that the cornerstone of femininity is motherhood and mothers, as life-givers and caregivers, are the "antithesis of violence" (Skjelsbæk 2001, 11). "Socially constructed gender binaries," such as the masculinization of militarism and the feminization of peace, effectively devalue femininity and isolate women and girls as "the devalued other[s] needing protection" (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010, 25). The narrative that women rely on men for protection strengthens hegemonic masculinity's claim to "safety and control" by cementing the association of femininity with

"vulnerability and dependency" (Åse 2018, 273). In society and politics, this narrative is instrumentalized by restricting women's agency, especially that over their "bodies and sexuality," and reallocating it to men, "in the name of protection" (Ibid). In addition to framing women as incapable victim, the feminization of peace is simultaneously, and paradoxically, used to frame women as active facilitators of peace. Critically, in both narratives, women's agency is not their own; instead, it is granted to them by their masculine protectors (Willett 2010; Barrow 2010). This premise plays a central role in international security and security studies' analyses of peace and conflict.

Gender Constructs in Security Theory and Practice

Considering that developing "explanations for the causes of war" is the foundational aim of international security studies, it is unsurprising that traditional theories innately embrace the perspective of hegemonic masculinity (Tamang 2016, 230). Utilizing this paper's chosen theoretical framework to engender mainstream security theories such as realism, reveals how security, as both a field of study and practice, emanates from an inherent "masculine bias" (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010, 25). For example, realist conceptualizations of security reflect a "masculine bias" by narrowly theorizing security as "state-centered" and "militaristic" (Ibid). In fact, realism entails two key assumptions: states are the primary actors and states' interests are "defined in terms of" gaining, maintaining, and demonstrating power (Tamang 2016, 228). Feminist scholars argue that realists project characteristics of hegemonic masculinity "onto the behavior of states" and quantify their success in terms of "power capabilities and capacity for self-help and autonomy" (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010, 25). For instance, Romaniuk and Wasylciw (2010) argue that realists perpetuate hegemonic masculinity by relying on "the behavior of men" holding public positions of power to develop their theories on state behavior.

The prevalence of hegemonic masculinity extends beyond theory into practice. A gendered power hierarchy, in which hegemonic masculinity dominates, underpins the entire international system, especially security structures like the United Nations ("UN"), states, and militaries. As mentioned above, the gendering of war and peace goes back to the privileging of "life-takers" over "life-givers" in the original gendered division of power (Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001). In fact, "international security organizations," have perpetuated this hierarchy since their inception by favoring "militarism" and militarized forms of masculinity as the only way to achieve peace (Ibid). Furthermore, by "framing international norms around (a lack of) protection," international security organizations obtain legitimacy and mobilize on the premise that women and girls are victims needing "protection;" even at the state level, the gendered opposition of the "masculine protectors" with "the feminine protected" normalizes gender inequity and authorizes "the use of military force" (Åse 2018, 278; Eichler 2014). As this paper previously discussed, state militaries and military institutions are epicenters of the "promot[ion] and normalize[ation]" of "the use of violence" and the valorization of hegemonic masculinity (Tickner 1992). Consequently, across the international system, Åse (2018, 278) argues that female bodies, and even femininity more generally, are viewed as the source of "vulnerability." Combining this perspective of international norms with this paper's earlier explanation of the 'protection narrative' reveals how the international system rooted designates women and girls as the objects of policies and actions instead of autonomous agents (Ibid).

Building on Weber's definition of the modern state as inherently militarized, most modern nation-states maintain highly militarized and realist security policies. Specifically, the dominating security policy across the international system can be characterized as "militarized patriarchy" (Reardon 2019, 7). Reardon (2019, 14) argues that the chronic "use and systemic

threat of violence to maintain the [global] power order" demonstrates how the core features of patriarchy function as the framework for international security. Furthermore, rhetorical analyses reveal that states perceived as more powerful are often referenced using rhetoric associated with hegemonic masculinity while weak or failed states are characterized using feminine stereotypes (Milner 2019; Pratt 2013). Milner (2019, 177) claims that ascribing gendered characteristics to states relative to their perceived power yields tangible implications; for example, stronger states may justify military action in a foreign state by utilizing negative feminine stereotypes to portray the foreign state as weak and in need of protection. For instance, Milner cites instances in which "Afghanistan is referred to as a victim of sexual violence at the hands of its president" (Ibid). Globally, the protection narrative is a key aspect of the gendered power hierarchy that not only plays a fundamental role in gender inequity but also defines significant concepts in international relations and security studies including "war, security, and peace" (Gentry et al. 2018).

When examining the development of the security studies field, it is critical to note that *security* did not initially exist as an "analytical concept" but rather an ambiguous "label" applied to certain issues (Baldwin 1997, 9). In fact, Baldwin (1997) claims that Cold War-era scholars viewed security studies as synonymous and exclusive to "military statecraft;" from this perspective, issues were only deemed a "security issue" if they had a relevant connection to "military force," if not, they were cast off as "low politics." The concepts of security and militarism have become virtually inextricable, with most definitions of security describing the term predominantly within the context of national security and military power. For example, *Britannica* defines security as "the state of being protected or safe from harm," then provides the example: "we must ensure our national security." Similarly, *Cambridge Dictionary* defines security as "protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as

crime or attacks by foreign countries." Feminist scholars argue that by focusing on the interests

of states and the "power-holders in society," traditional views of security "are embedded within a

patriarchal system" and "based on gendered constructions," such as "heroism and protectionism"

(Milner 2019, 167). Similarly, the patriarchal nature of the international security system

valorizes war by characterizing it as a "heroic" form of masculinity that exists in opposition to "a

feminized, devalued notion of peace," regarded as an "unattainable" reality (Milner 2019, 168).

In fact, antimilitaristic approaches to security are traditionally dismissed because they are seen as

"utopian," "feminized," and passive, essentially antithetical to the dominating realist approach to

security (Ibid).[1]

Given the prevalence of the militarized, hegemonic masculine paradigm in international relations

and security studies, it is crucial to engender security issues and decision-making to illuminate

the ways in which militaristic and masculine biases may generate detrimental consequences. As

an example, the following section will explore this idea by applying a gender analysis to the

concepts of human security vs. state security and security vs. insecurity:

Analyzing Security Studies theories illustrates how the modern international system continues to

embrace a highly militarized and masculine conceptualization of security, which fundamentally

promotes traditional, state-centric security policies (SSPs) for all security issues, even those that

are clearly an issue of human security. In fact, international security institutions largely neglect

alternative approaches, such as human security. SSPs reflect the position of realists by aiming to

protect "the state and its borders in terms of the military and security aspects" (Ibid, 12).

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[1] The primacy of realism in international security studies is part and parcel of all the foregoing observations, and other paradigms – discounted and dismissed, including critical theories, feminist theory, indigenous theory, even peace studies, etc. – are marginalized and *feminized* both literally, in terms of who does the work, and within the international relations and security studies hierarchy.

Alternatively, human security policies prioritize people and their vulnerabilities over the state and military. The West Asia-North Africa Institute's (WANA) "Theory of Change" project defines human security as the following:

> "a state of individual and communal peace achieved through an environment that meets the basic needs of individuals and through legislations that guarantee the rights and duties of all citizens. A state that promotes confidence in state institutions and cements citizenship and belonging" (Bondokji and Mhadeen 2019a, 4).

WANA breaks down human security into two categories, "material" and "abstract;" material refers to "basic services that meet human needs," such as "safe transportation, decent healthcare, and quality education," while abstract refers to "rights, freedoms, and duties" (Ibid, 6). The 1994 UN Human Development Report identified "seven main categories" of HS, including: "economic," "food," "health," "environmental," "personal," "community," and "political" (Ibid, 24-5).

Although the chief aim of national security is theoretically protecting a nation's inhabitants, SSPs assume that increased security for the state automatically results in increased "security for its people" (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010). For instance, Reardon (2019, 8) argues that in the modern international system state leaders perceive security to be constantly threatened; therefore, even democratic states utilize "the exigencies of security," such as nuclear proliferation, great power competition, or terrorism to justify "violat[ing] internationally agreed-upon standards of human rights" (Ibid, 9). Most commonly, SSPs may "restrict the participation of individuals and civil society" by employing tactics, such as "excessive use of force, selective application of security measures," and even "constraints on freedoms of expressions" (Bondokji and Mhadeen 2019a, 2). A key reason why SSPs fall short of meeting the standards of human security is that militarism views autonomy, "self-sufficienc[y]," and "armed independence" as the pinnacles of

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national security, while completely neglecting the relational" and "interdependen[t]" nature of security dynamics (Cohn 2011). By focusing on "strategic and military power issues" of national security, leaders and decisionmakers often fail to consider the potential consequences of SSPs on every demographic as well as assessing the equitable distribution of the pros and cons of such policies across certain groups (Reardon 2019, 23). Furthermore, the depersonalized nature of SSPs allows those in positions of power to intentionally "rationalize and obscure" decisions that may harm individuals over whom they have power (Reardon 2019, 13). But even discourses of human security reflect "individualistic" and "masculinist" perceptions of security (Ibid, 12). When international institutions and states adopt aspects of the human security approach, they either neglect gender by addressing people and citizens as a homogeneous monolith or, when they "acknowledge gender," they perpetuate "gendered understandings" of who needs protection (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010). For example, initiatives targeting "gender-based violence" typically interpret gender as female and direct their efforts and resources mainly towards female victims; Romaniuk and Wasylciw (2010) employ this example to argue that "the 'masculine, aggressive' stereotype" imposes greater consequences on "individual men in conflict situations" than "the 'feminine, passive' stereotype" does on "individual women in the same situations." In addition to reifying existing gender stereotypes, such as women are innately peaceful and vulnerable, these approaches to human security often disregard the vulnerabilities faced by men, especially men who do not mirror hegemonic masculinity.

As mentioned previously, security, on an academic and political level, is typically conceptualized within the context of militarism and national security. However, research reveals that, in reality, people often define security, and specifically human security, "by its absence;" this finding indicates that "citizens are overwhelmed" by "various unmet human needs" but also

illustrates a key element of international security and militarism (Bondokji and Mhadeen 2019b, 7). Security organizations' legitimacy depends on the existence of insecurity. One way this phenomenon appears is through security leader's employment of "national security threat language" (Forester 2019). Particularly, Young (2003, 13) contends that "public leaders" often "invoke fear" before "promis[ing] to keep those living under them safe;" Forester (2019) argues that a cultivated sense of vulnerability causes a society to embrace "hypermasculine" and militarized security strategies. Consequently, citizens often exchange "some of their civil liberties" for state protection and human rights movements, including "women's rights," become "subjugated" (Forester 2019; Tickner 1992). Peterson (1997) refers to this aspect of militarism as "the protection racket," in which security states deem any "push back" as potentially treasonous and justification for revoking protection or retaliatory violence" (Forester 2019).

This paper previously discussed how security institutions and leaders instrumentalize the protection narrative to justify wars or military action; however, it is crucial to note that "military violence" often results in "increased insecurities" for women and children (Eichler 2014). However, within the current paradigm, this insecurity extends to larger populations as well. Tickner (1992) argues that because the fields of international relations and security are such "thoroughly masculinized sphere[s] of activity," the voices of women *and* non-hegemonic men, are automatically deemed "inauthentic." At the policy development and decision-making level, "gendered discourse that privileges" masculinity can generate insecurity by demarcating what is and is not acceptable rather than permitting the expression of "diverse viewpoints" (Stanford University 2016). Consequently, scholars at Stanford University (2016) argue that when addressing security issues, policy options that may be the best approach, might not be "voiced for fear that they will be seen as weak" and "feminine." Furthermore, as this paper previously

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explained, militaristic hegemonic masculinity "inheres with a logic of escalation" that "normalize[s] insecurity" by legitimizing violence as a "naturalized expression of masculinity" and a "resolution to conflict" (Higate 2018, 78).

The theoretical framework developed in the Literature Review section of this paper will be applied in the following sections within the context of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and specifically, UNSCR 1325 and "Women, Peace, and Security" (WPS) to examine how the international security field not only fails to adequately address gender issues but contributes to the preservation of the existing militaristic and hegemonic masculine paradigm. Pratt and Richter-Devroe (2011, 496) effectively summarize the aim of this approach within the international security context: it goes beyond demands that "gender (rather than women) becomes an integral part of conflict analysis and conflict resolution," by emphasizing the questions of "how 'gender' is used and with what political implications."

Contextualizing the Theoretical Framework

The UN and the UNSC

Binary Conceptualizations of Gender; Hegemonic Masculinity; and Militarism

Since this paper will focus on UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda, it is critical to understand how the dynamics of the gendered power hierarchy and militarism exist within the contexts of the UN and the UNSC.

The UN was established in 1945 with the signing of The Charter of the United Nations, which outlines the guiding "purposes and principles" of the UN as a collective security organization (U.N. Charter 1945). First, the UN exemplifies a hegemonic masculine institution that assumes a biological and binary understanding of gender. On a semantic level, this is reflected by the UN's

preferred usage of the word "sex" rather than gender in discussions, especially those related to human rights. For instance, Article 1 of the UN's founding charter declares one of its primary purposes as: "to achieve international co-operation … in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, *sex,* language, or religion" (1945). Furthermore, scholars argue that when the UN does use the term 'gender,' it denotes "the socially constructed roles played by women and men" that are ascribed to them on the basis of their" biological "sex" (Gierycz 2001). Within this paradigm, the "masculine protectors" exist in hierarchical opposition with "the feminine protected," consequently enabling men to hijack the gender equality agenda as an opportunity to flex their *power over* women by framing women as the helpless objects of policies (Eichler 2014).

For example, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), created in 1946, illustrates how the UN approaches the issue of gender equality and women's rights from a predominantly "political rather than substantive" angle; Gierycz (2001) argues that instead of actively incorporating "women's perspectives," into all UN business, the CSW mostly "project[s the] wider political debate" into what was intended to be an "intergovernmental women's forum." Additionally, in 2010, the UN General Assembly "unanimously voted" to establish a centralized body for achieving gender equality, the "UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women," or UN Women (UN website). Although UN Women was created for "accelerating progress in achieving gender equality," as the entity's name suggests, it mostly discusses how women can be empowered within the existing patriarchal paradigm rather than advocating for deconstructing the harmful gendered understandings and norms that foster inequity and injustice not just for women and girls but for anyone who fails to embrace hegemonic masculinity (Ibid; UN Women website). These examples demonstrate how in the

UN context, gender issues default to women's issues while men and masculinity remain unexamined.

Furthermore, most UN gender-related initiatives prioritize outward-facing advancements, such as advocating for an increase in the participation of women at various decision-making levels, as their main strategy for achieving gender equality. However, many feminist scholars claim that increasing the visibility or participation of women, "because they are women" imposes numerous risks "whereby gender will be essentialized" and the existing gendered hierarchy persists (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 2010, 31). For instance, research finds that when women gain decision-making positions in international and national institutions, they are typically "relegated to 'women's issues'" instead of being integrated into the "bodies that deal particularly with issues of security" (Ibid). Furthermore, Smith (2001) argues that "mobilizing women as women," grounds mobilization in "traditional gender concepts," whose strong appeal typically thwarts the "process of questioning the content and meaning of social categories." Additionally, the previous section explained how the UN's biological and binary understanding of gender perpetuates stereotypes, such as "masculine protectors" and "the feminine protected;" consequently, most UN gender-related initiatives emphasize women's need of protection (Eichler 2014). Similar to a focus on participation, "a focus on protection" reduces prospects of questioning the fundamental aspects of militarism, such as the belief that "war-making and military violence" are "acceptable" and even "necessary" "political actions" (Åse 2018, 278). This outcome reflects the militaristic nature of the UN as a collective security organization.

While the UN as a whole perpetuates militarized and masculinized notions of peace and security, the UNSC, in particular, is widely regarded as the "preserve of masculinized power and militarized visions of security (George et al. 2018, 313). As the UN's principal entity for

"ensuring international peace and security," the UNSC exemplifies the UN's mission as a collective security organization, in which the objective is to prevent war through deterrence. Because military and security are the domains of men, the UN and UNSC began and remain deeply masculinized in concept, structure, and leadership; essentially, the UNSC can be understood as a group of elite men promising coordinated national military responses to aggression as a form of deterrent.[2] In fact, the organization's central raison d'être is militarism: for example, mobilizing members' militaries against aggressors and building peacekeeping forces from the military personnel of member states. The UNSC does promote peace, but peace through threat. UN 'peacekeeping' is literally the mobilization of troops. For examples, UNSC "references to the word 'peace'" mostly appear in conjunction with the word 'security,' and more specifically "the interdependent phrase 'international peace and security,'" instead of "development or human rights" (Otto 2017). Within this context, the UNSC utilizes elements of human security, such as protecting and promoting human rights, development, and refugee assistance, to respond to war more than to promote peace[3]. In general, the UNSC embraces a truly militaristic and realist approach to all security issues, which Shepherd (2016) argues results in state- and "elite-centric security politics," involved in "making war safe for women" rather than deconstructing the institutions proclivity for war.

Additionally, as this paper previously mentioned, the UN's power paradigm contains not only hierarchies of militarism and hegemonic masculinity but also imperialism. For instance, the five permanent members of the UNSC – the US, Russia, France, China, and the UK – are global military powers boasting histories of colonialism and conquest (U.N. Charter art. 23-32 1945). While the

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[2] Refer to page 19.
[3] Refer to Pages 16-8.

nuance of colonialism is often neglected in examinations of UN actions, it is critical to note that "colonial hierarchies," coexist and interact with gendered hierarchies (Tickner 1992). Recall Brown's (2020) explanation of *power over*; the highly militarized and masculinized states that dominate the UN and the UNSC play into these "colonial" and gendered "hierarchies of domination and subjugation" to reify their superiority by "degrading feminized and 'barbarian' others" (Tickner 1992). For example, when the UN does acknowledge the role of gendered norms and practices, it is primarily by pointing their finger at cultures and traditions they deem as unsupportive of women's empowerment, most commonly Eastern or Arab states, while ignoring how the organization's own gendered foundation contributes to the issue. Therefore, it is critical to consider how elements of colonialism, militarism, and hegemonic masculinity become infused within the international gender equality discussion.

The UNSC's binary conceptualization of gender in conjunction with militarism results in an institution that not only fails to address the structural causes of gender inequity but also perpetuates gendered stereotypes and understandings of security and peace that exemplify militarized hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, the "institutional inequality and power relations" which dominate the UNSC's approach to gender persists unchallenged and unexamined (O'Connor 2014). Within this paradigm, any attempt to address gender issues runs the risk of reinforcing the status quo in which femininity has no autonomy or authority and human insecurity exacerbates.

Constructing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

A review of existing literature reveals that since the mid-1900s, gender equality has become an increasing central topic within the "global political agenda" (Squires 2007, 1). Notably, gender equality's importance within the "agendas of liberal states and organizations" emanates not only

from "rights-based" reasonings but also "utility-based;" for example, achieving gender equality has been framed as an indicator of "modernization and economic efficiency" (Squires 2007, 1). Furthermore, the gender equality agenda emerged largely as the result of women's activism in the face of sex-based discrimination and marginalization; therefore, most initiatives tied to gender equality default to women's rights or empowerment initiatives (Squires 2007; Krook and True 2010).

This section briefly mentions some of the UN's gender equality initiatives, including the CSW and UN Women; additional initiatives continued to materialize throughout the end of the twentieth century (USIP; Krook and True 2010). However, within the context of the UNSC, the "Women and Peace" concept, later rebranded the "Women, Peace, and Security agenda (WPS)," emerged as the organization's dominant gender-related agenda in "the early 1990s" (Gierycz 2001). From its inception, the UN's conceptualizations of WPS embodied the UN's proclivity for improving the "political participation of women" rather than addressing the root of the issue (Gierycz 2001). In 2000, the WPS agenda became codified under UNSCR 1325. However, critics note that the resolution largely contradicts the transformational aspirations of the agenda's creators; for instance, Cora Weiss, a feminist activist and co-drafter of UNSCR 1325, argues that the agenda was intended "support the demilitarization of society and facilitate the development of anti-militarist politics of peace" (Shepherd 2016, 324). Otto (2009, 239) alludes to the fundamental incompatibility between radical feminism and the UNSC by describing attempts to "engage" the UNSC with the "antimilitaristic" approach of "women's peace movements" as "a futile attempt to employ the 'master's tools' to dismantle the 'master's house'." More explicitly, because the UNSC functions with the assumption that war is inevitable unless deterred, the entity's entire

mission is essentially *peace through security*. This understanding unveils the inherent tension between the UNSC and the WPS framework.

Therefore, many claim that UNSCR 1325 and WPS exemplify how the UNSC is constructed in a way that not only preserves militarism and hegemonic masculinity, but also further perpetuates gendered power disparities and insecurities. The next two sections will outline the institutional aspects of UNSCR 1325 and WPS before examining their shortcomings and consequences.

<u>UN1325 and WPS as an Institution</u>

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security was unanimously adopted by the UNSC on October 31, 2000. Because "UNSCR 1325 was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter," which makes it international law, implementation of the resolution is a "obligatory responsibility" for every UN member state (Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Since 2000, the UNSC has adopted nine more resolutions to reinforce UNSCR 1325: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019) (UN Women). Additionally, approximately 327 subsequent UNSCRs cite UNSCR 1325. UNSCR 1325 and related WPS policies function as the UN and UNSC's principal gender-related institution; therefore, this section will analyze how the institutional predispositions for failure outlined above appear within UNSCR 1325 and larger WPS agenda.

 UNSCR 1325 contains four main pillars – *participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery* – however, this paper centers its analysis on the first three pillars, as research reveals that, in practice, relief and recover remain relatively absent from WPS initiatives.

Binary Conceptualizations of Gender and Militarism

A content analysis of UNSCR 1325 illustrates how the resolution not only adopts a binary and biological prospective of gender but also defaults gender to women and girls. Although the resolution outlines the *Women,* Peace, and Security agenda, it serves as the UNSC's primary policy framework for addressing gender issues in conflict. The resolution includes recommendations pertaining to "gender mainstreaming," "gender-sensitivity," a "gender perspective," and "gender consideration[s];" however, most references to the term 'gender' appear in tandem with the terms 'women' and 'girls' while the resolution only references the term 'men' once and omits any reference to 'boys.' For instance, Section 8 of UNSCR 1325, which "calls on all actors involved" to "adopt a gender perspective" when "negotiating or implementing peace agreements," defines the phrase "gender perspective" only within the context of women and girls. For example:

    a. "The special needs of *women and girls…*"

    b. "Measures that support local *women's* peace initiatives…. Involve *women* in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements."

    c. "Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of *women and girls…*" (S/RES/1325 2000, 3) [4]

Furthermore, all references to humanitarian concerns and human rights laws specifically address those related to 'women and girls' and all references to gender-based violence only mention 'women and girls' as victims. The resolution's only direct mention of 'men' demonstrates the UNSC's traditional understanding of gender. In Section 13, the resolution "encourages" the consideration of "the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account

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[4] Additionally, this definition of "gender perspective" completely excludes non-binary people or trans people who in times of conflict (for example, the war in Ukraine), find themselves defaulted by the state to their gender-assigned-at-birth even after transitioning.

the needs of their dependents." By separating ex-combatants into two groups – men and women – this recommendation not only reflects binary and oppositional understandings of gender but completely disregards all other forms of social identity that factor into the human experience. Furthermore, by only referencing men in the context of military service, the recommendation perpetuates the militarization of masculinity.[5]

By constraining the WPS agenda to war zones and times of conflict, UNSCR 1325 reflects the inherent tension between the UNSC and WPS introduced previously. Although the UNSC functions as a militarized deterrent to war, UNSCR 1325 explicitly positions women as victims of war and peacemakers after war but gives not explicit role for women in deterrence itself. The incapability between WPS and the UNSC is further illustrated by UNSCR 1325 failure to "condemn war and conflict;" in fact, Otto (2017) argues that UNSCR 1325 endorses the notion that "lawful justifications for the use of force" may expand to encompass "the protection of the rights of women" (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 495).

Additionally, although the resolution nominally includes a 'prevention' pillar, scholars argue that the construction of the pillar "creates a paradox," in which "a logic of peace, a logic of militarism, and a logic of security" coalesce into an overarching "logic of security" that eclipses the definitive "goal of peace" (Shepherd 2016; Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 3). For instance, the resolution's only references to the 'prevention of conflict' merely recommend increasing the "representation of women in decision-making structures;" this approach not only illustrates the UNSC's tendency to prioritize superficial advancements while avoiding fundamental changes, but also implies "the only way to protect women" in conflict is to simply

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[5] Refer to "Gender Stereotypes and Militarism"

increase their presence in the decision-making apparatus of heavily militarized and masculinized security structures (O'Connor 2014).

As a result, UNSCR 1325 upholds a fundamental premise of militarism: the only way to achieve peace is through obtaining and retaining security, which necessitates "heavy military presence" and possibly "military action" (Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 3). The above explanation of UNSCR 1325's approach to prevention directly relates to an idea introduced earlier in this paper, the UN, especially the UNSC, maintains militarized and masculine notions of 'peace' and 'security' and tend to combine the two into the interdependent phrase: "peace and security" (Otto 2017). This phrase appears three times in UNSCR 1325. Consequently, the WPS agenda does not tie "the path to peace" to the reduction of military expenditure; instead, it exclusively frames "the path to peace" as "the integration" of a "gender perspective," in which "women" are the unit of analysis (O'Connor 2014).

Gender Stereotypes: Protection and Peace

In addition to embracing traditional conceptualizations of gender and militarism, UNSCR 1325 perpetuates the gendered stereotypes and norms explored in previous sections of this paper. Predominantly, the WPS agenda promotes the false narrative that women are innately peaceful and therefore, vulnerable, and dependent on men for protection. In fact, the United States Institute of Peace identifies the two main issues addressed by UNSCR 1325 as "the inordinate impact of violent conflict and war on women and girls," and "the crucial role that women should, and already do play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding."

As mentioned in the Literature Review section, approaches to gender equality and security that embody hegemonic masculinity ascribe women a specific form of "agency and identity,"

particularly "as the objects of protective action" (Willett 2010, 144). The prevalence of the

protection narrative within the WPS agenda is self-evident, considering that 'protection' is one of

the four main pillars of UNSCR 1325. Specifically, the resolution focuses on protecting "women

and girls in war zones" and emphasizes their position as victims of "sexual violence and internal

displacement" (O'Connor 2014). UNSCR 1325's protection pillar highlights one fatal flaw of the

resolution, it centers the gendered analysis of conflict on "sexual violence and rape" and directly

aligns gender with "women and victimhood" (Barrow 2010, 222). First, this approach subverts

"women's agency as active participants" and censors the alternative ways women participate and

experience armed conflict, such as "actors, combatants, or peace-builders" (Barrow 2010, 222-

3). Secondly, this narrative reflects the larger international discourse around sexual violence that

fails to incorporate men and non-binary individuals' experiences of "sexual violence in conflict"

and "the wider social impact" of gender-based violence (Barrow 2010, 222-3). By focusing the

protection pillar on women as victims of sexual violence, WPS's approach to gender-based

violence institutes a paradoxical paradigm in which the female exists solely as the victim, but the

male occupies the contrasting roles of 'perpetrator' and 'protector.'

Another critical element of UNSCR 1325's protection pillar is that it conceptualizes "gender

justice and accountability" specifically within the context of "wartime sexual violence" (Pratt

and Richter-Devroe 2011, 495). Scholars argue that by exclusively "prioritize[ing] rape by

combatants, committed as a tactic of warfare," "WPS resolutions" discredit the issue of

"systemic violence" occurring in "hypothetical times of peace" as well as "post-conflict"

violence or violence committed by "peacekeepers" (Dames 2021, 13; Aroussi 2017, 33).

Additionally, O'Connor (2014) points out that UNSCR 1325 does not explicitly link "strategic

sexual violence with the peace and security of women," nor does it address "violations" of

women's bodies as a critical issue; these connections are not directly acknowledged until 2008 by UNSCR 1820. Furthermore, scholars claim that the WPS agenda addresses gender-based violence in a way that narrowly defines justice as "criminal prosecution," which produces "hierarchies of victims" and neglects the connection between "vulnerability" and "structural inequality" (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 495; Aroussi 2017). Overall, UNSCR 1325 glosses over the connection between sexual and gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinity. Recall that masculinity's *power over* femininity requires the masculine to flex its power to maintain it, usually through increasingly violent actions like gender-based violence (Brown 2022). In the context of conflict and war zones, UN research found that violent extremist organizations frequently instrumentalize "acts of sexual and gender-based violence" to "increase their power" and "impose" a hegemonic masculine "ideology" that authorizes "the oppression of women and control over their lives, means," and "sexual and reproductive rights" (Brown 2019, 7; UNESCWA 2022, 14). Additionally, by focusing on protecting women from physical violence, UNSCR 1325 disregards other forms of violence, such as economic, psychological, or emotional violence, that often occur in tandem with physical violence and reflect larger structural or societal gender inequity (Alsawalqa 2021, 6).

While UNSCR 1325 primarily addresses the need to protect women and girls from sexual violence in war zones, the protection pillar extends the victimization of women to other issues, namely internal displacement. Critically, UNSCR 1325 does not identify the threat of "forced displacement" as a problem of protection, rather it waits to promote the protection of women until after they become victims of displacement (O'Connor 2014). Additionally, even when UNSCR 1325 appears to promote women's agency, it does so within the context of "the role of women as victims" (O'Connor 2014). For example, UNSCR 1325 stresses the "need to increase"

women's "role in decision-making" regarding "conflict prevention and resolution;" however, implicit in the resolution's call to increase women's participation is the premise that women's insight may benefit decision makers by providing the victims' perspective (O'Connor 2014). This example speaks to the instrumentalization of women within UNSCR 1325 and the greater WPS agenda, predominantly through employing the stereotypical narrative that women are innately peaceful.

Although not an official pillar of UNSCR 1325, "adopt[ing] a gender perspective in peace operations, negotiations, and agreements" appears as a main theme throughout the resolution (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 492). However, UNSCR 1325's gendered analysis of peacebuilding employs the same strategy as its calls to increase women's participation in decision-making; in both scenarios, the resolution focuses on how increasing women's involvement can benefit the institution rather than women themselves. In this regard, UNSCR 1325 repeatedly references the stereotypical notion that women are innately peaceful, and therefore, increasing their involvement in peacebuilding will yield better results. For instance:

> "Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls,
> effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in
> the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of
> international peace and security" (S/RES/1325 2000, 2).

UNSCR 1325 directly calls for increasing women's involvement in peacebuilding six times. One main criticism of WPS is the extent to which it employs the gendered understanding of women as peaceful to constrain women's participation to processes related to peace rather than security more generally. The argument goes; as long as women stay within their roles of victims or

peacemakers their presence does not pose a threat to masculinized power structures like the UNSC (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 492).

Overall, UNSCR 1325 exemplifies the UN and UNSC's institutional inability to successfully address the root of gender issues. This section outlines how the resolution embodies militarism and hegemonic masculinity by embracing a binary conceptualization of gender and perpetuating gendered stereotypes. By failing to critically examine the existing "institutional inequality and power relations", UNSCR 1325 reinforces the status quo in which femininity remains subservient to the norms of masculinity and militarism. Therefore, analyses of UNSCR 1325 and related policies must scrutinize how the WPS framework functions as an international institution regulating the role of radical feminism in international security.

<u>Consequences and Shortcomings of UNSCR 1325 and WPS</u>

WPS Militarism and Norm Setting

Although feminist activists advocated for UNSCR 1325 and WPS on the premise that the agenda should condemn militarism and promote "the development of anti-militarist politics of peace;" in practice, the resolution does the opposite by legitimizing and normalizing violent conflict (Shepherd 2016, 324). Framing UNSCR 1325 as the Women, *Peace,* and Security framework provides a prime opportunity for the UN to condemn war and militarism; however, as introduced in the previous section, the resolution simply integrates women into the existing paradigm, resulting in the practice of what many scholars call "making war safer for women" (Shepherd 2016, 324; cite others). Specifically, Otto (2017) argues that by maintaining the inevitably of conflict, UNSCR 1325 distorts the original intention of the WPS agenda from "making armed conflict impossible, to making armed conflict safer for women… as an end it itself" (Johnson-

Freese and Markham 2022, 4). Underlying many feminist critiques of UNSCR 1325 is the

argument that by focusing on superficial recommendations, such as increasing women's

participation, rather than structural transformations, the resolution fails to deconstruct the highly

militarized and masculine ways in which the international system "understand[s] and pursue[s]

international security" (Wright 2019, 653). This paper will refer to the ideology institutionalized

by UNSCR 1325 as '*WPS militarism*' and defines the phrase as follows:

> *WPS militarism*, like militarism more generally, conceptualizes peace and security
>
> mostly in "military terms;" yet it goes one step further by weaponizing gender
>
> issues to legitimize the continuation, and even expansion, of the state's monopoly
>
> on the use of violence (Otto 2017).

UNSCR 1325 proposes a set of policies that not only "solidifies the militarized state," but also

offers justification for military action (Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 3).Recall Åse (2018,

278) and Eichler's (2014) discussion of state's instrumentalizing norms of insecurity and the

"masculine protectors" and "feminine protected" dichotomy to authorize "the use of military

force." For instance, UNSCR 1325's repeated victimization of women within the protection

pillar sets a norm in which actors can "legitimize" their "militaristic and carceral" tactics by

claiming they are acting "in the name of protecting women," mainly from "sexual violence, and

promoting their rights" (Otto 2017).

Imperialism also plays a critical role in WPS militarism, mainly through the concept of the

'white savior'. Specifically, scholars argue that the third WPS-related UNSCR, UNSCR 1889

(2009), employs language, such as "cultural discrimination" and "the rise of extremism" and

"fanatical views on women," that frames "brown men" as the source of "brown women's woes,"

thus providing justification for western intervention in decidedly "fragile" countries (Pratt 2013,

775; Dames 2021, 10). Additionally, scholars contend that WPS-related "case studies by Global North" actors emphasize the issue of sexual violence perpetuated by "violent" "brown men," while wholly neglecting "state violence," particularly towards gender and ethnic minorities (Parashar 2019, 834; Dames 2021, 10). Furthermore, the above framing portrays the false assumption that Western states have achieved gender security and are therefore qualified to act as the "benevolent saviors" of women (Aroussi 2017, 29; Dames 2021, 10). One prominent example of this phenomenon is the US's framing of the Global War on Terror as "a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 3).[6]

As introduced above, not only does UNSCR 1325 embrace militarism, in the form of WPS militarism, it also actively marginalizes opposing perspectives, nominally anti-militaristic feminism. By separating "gender mainstreaming" in peace and security practices from the overarching "pursuit of gender equality," UNSCR 1325 can simultaneously support "women's participation in peace building and conflict while" while suppressing radical "feminist critiques of structural militarism" (O'Connor 2014). In fact, many feminist activists note that the UN imposes a set of "discursive speech norms" that constrain activists' participation in formal security conversations by prohibiting individuals who engage with the UNSC from "mentioning imperialism," criticizing "member states," or critiquing the structure of the institution in any way (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 493; Chilmeran 2022, 755). Willett (2010, 150) argues that by restricting dialogue within the parameters of "liberal peace," the UN prioritizes a "rationalist and

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[6] Furthermore, Otto (2017) argues that UNSCR 1325 supports the UNSC's overall militaristic approach to peace, in that it directly and indirectly supports expanding the international arms market, "increase[ing]" the "power of state security institutions," and even "more coercive policing of expressions of sexuality and gender."

managerial" militarized masculinity, which effectively marginalizes all other varieties of "masculinities and femininities."

The restrictive norms governing WPS activism illustrate how UNSCR 1325 contains resonances of imperialism, as noted earlier in this paper. For example, although the resolution "calls for empowering women" and "indigenous women's peace strategies," the UN often selects specific "local actors" and legitimizes "their form of agency" separate from "local politics, ethnic," and "class divisions;" consequently "render[ing] other actors" and their "agency as deviant" (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 498). By privileging a "liberal" approach to WPS, UNSCR 1325 does not support the more radical "women's movements" striving for "social and political transformation," such as anti-capitalist or anti-colonialism movements (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 498). Instead, women activists are expected to portray positivity and represent hegemonic masculinity's "utopian" view of women as "bridge-builders" and "peace-makers" (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 493).

By reaffirming the gender stereotype that women are "natural peacemakers," the norms established by WPS impose contradictory expectations for women's engagement: women must harness their innate proclivity for "conflict-avers[ion]" to contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding; however, they cannot go as far as to outrightly condemn conflict and militarism (O'Connor 2014). This dynamic extends beyond the realm of diplomacy and activism; recall the discussion in the Literature Review pertaining to "gendered discourse[s]" that privilege masculinity in policy development and decision-making, in which scholars argue that the masculinized nature of international relations and security renders women's voices "unauthentic" and the feminine perspective "unattainable" and "passive" (Tickner 1992; Stanford University 2016; Milner 2019). Additionally, Romaniuk and Wasylciw (2010, 31) argue that even when

women's participation in high-level decision-making structures increases, the women become stuck in a "double-bind," in which women who "advocate" for traditionally "masculine positions" or embody masculine traits like aggression are regarded as "anomalies," while women who adopt traditionally feminine positions "reinforce" existing assumptions that "gender is innate rather than constructed." Consequently, engaging more women in the existing paradigm arguably further reifies gender power dynamics by upholding gendered stereotypes. As outlined earlier, UNSCR 1325's vague recommendations for advancing the WPS agenda, largely pigeonhole women into the feminine context, mostly as peacebuilders and victims; therefore, women's participation runs the risk of becoming constrained to "feminized contributions," such as undertaking "domesticating and pacifying roles" during post-conflict reconstruction or aiding in the development of "civilized rules" and policies targeting the protection of women in places perceived as "uncivilized" like the "global South" (Otto 2017). By capitalizing on the gendered assumption that women are innately peaceful, UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS policies encouraging the participation of women in peacekeeping operations do so under the implicit premise that women would function as "sexual violence problem-solving forces," protecting "local women, from local men, and male peacekeepers" (Willett 2010, 152). This framing imposes additional responsibility onto women and fails to impose "accountability for peacekeepers who commit sexual crimes" (Willett 2010, 152).

The above examples of the UN regulating women's engagement within the norms of WPS militarism speak to the larger issues hindering UNSCRS 1325's success: a lack of genuine political will and weak implementation mechanisms.

UNSCR 1325 and WPS Implementation and Instrumentalization

Barriers to Implementation

As previously discussed, "the inclusion of women" within WPS "is largely nominal," that is, UNSCR 1325 invites women into "existing institutional structures" with predetermined "decision-making processes" and constraints and subsequently "render[s] their involvement ineffectual and their voices absent" (O'Connor 2014). Additionally, the previous section discusses how the UN's speech norms prohibit women from delineating the terms of discourse and marginalizes any contribution that deviates from acceptable expressions of femininity. Beyond women's participation, the UNSC more generally confines WPS activity within the parameters of institutional norms, such as militarism, hegemonic masculinity, liberal feminism, and imperialism; therefore, many UNSCR 1325-related initiatives assume western-centric notions of women's rights impose a "universal" standard of "equality" that often "conflict[s] with cultural relativity" (Parker 2013). In many cases, these western biases are reflected in the funding requirements of international donors.[7] Consequently, women's groups that adopt the UNSCR 1325 framework typically fail to "mobilize women at the grassroots" level because these women perceive any UN- or western-backed WPS initiative "as a form of neo-colonialism" (Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, 498; Parker 2013).

In addition to the cultural barriers to implementation, UNSCR 1325 lacks a robust implementation mechanism on an institutional level. The resolution itself employs ambiguous and nonauthoritative

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[7] For example, programs run by International NGOs with the goal of empowering Middle Eastern women are often rooted in 'Euro-centrism' and perpetuate orientalist stereotypes of Middle Eastern women that repeatedly conflate religious traditions with examples of oppression. The most notable example is the western perception of veiling.

phrases, including "requests," "invites," "encourages," and "where appropriate" (S/RES/1325 2000). Although Security Council resolutions commonly adopt ambiguity to facilitate political acceptance, neglecting to establish concrete demands on issues pertaining to human security effectively renders recommendations trivial. Recall Reardon's (2019, 8) argument that in the current realist international system, state leaders, even those from democratic states, often utilize the "exigencies of security" to justify their human rights violations. Furthermore, UNSCR 1325 refers to the integration of a "gender perspective," "component," or "considerations" six times, yet fails to include an exact definition of what these practices entail or a framework for their implementation. In general, UNSCR 1325 does not specify how actors should implement the resolution's recommendations, while on a larger scale, there is a "lack of integration" of UNSCR 1325 provisions and WPS "principles in the core business resolutions of the UNSC" or across the larger UN institution (George et al. 2018, 313). However, when the WPS agenda is integrated into the larger security conversation, it is mostly within the context of women's need of protection (George et al. 2018, 313). Additionally, scholars argue that "the need for" additional "resolutions and treaties" related to WPS clearly indicates the overarching "ineffectiveness of UNSCR 1325" (O'Connor 2014).

The next section of this paper will examine how the shortcomings of UNSCR 1325 discussed so far affect the implementation of the resolution at an international and domestic level before introducing the ways in which weak implementation mechanisms open UNSCR 1325 up to political co-optation.

Implementing UNSCR 1325

As mentioned above, UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda function as an international institution that imposes norms of 'acceptable feminist activism' within the realm of security, and sets the

standard for implementation, or a lack therefore in this case. This is seen in numerous ways on a state and international level:

First, while UNSCR 1325 serves as the primary WPS framework in the international arena, domestically, states typically operationalize the agenda through a "national action plan (NAP)," which theoretically lays out a state specific "WPS implementation roadmap" (Chilmeran 2022, 747). Although all UN member states are obligated to implement UNSCR 1325 under international law, only 104 (54%) of member states have adopted a National Action Plan ("NAP") for 1325. Furthermore, approximately 33% of 1325 NAPs are outdated, with expiry dates in 2021 or earlier (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). According to *Women in International Security,* as of 2021 only 36% of "countries with NAPs" had allocated budgets for the plans, showing how international support for the WPS agenda is mostly rhetorical (Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 2). Additionally, research shows that "minority world NAPs" prioritize "outward facing" initiatives, such as meeting quotas for women's representation in state security structures, to maintain good appearances internationally and meet requirements for foreign funding (Shepherd 2016).

In addition to laying the groundwork for domestic implementation, UNSCR 1325 provides justification for the incorporation of WPS into states' foreign policies as well. For instance, Section 6 of the resolution contains direct recommendations for "national training programmes" for member states' "military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment" (S/RES/1325 2000, 2). UNSCR 1325 also justifies foreign action by addressing recommendations to "all parties to armed conflict." Subsequently, powerful Western states adopt outward facing NAPs that focus on the "making war safer for women" practices of WPS militarism; for example, the NAPs of "the US," "UK, and Australia" reflect a narrow and

imperialist of WPS by framing "war and insecurity" as predominantly "overseas" issues outside

of "the national context" (Shepherd 2016, 324). Additionally, Aroussi (2017, 8) highlights that

"Western liberal states" often attempt to harness their support of the WPS agenda internationally

as political clout; for example, Australia cited its commitment to WPS in the country's foreign

policy as "one of the main arguments" in "its bid for a non-permanent seat" at the UNSC in

2012. Overall, the background section of this paper illustrates how, under WPS militarism,

global powers can instrumentalize and weaponize the WPS agenda as a political tool. This

instrumentalization becomes especially consequential in active war zones for several reasons.

First, the highly gendered nature of war causes "gender polarizations" to intensify during times

of war, as the distinctions between masculine and feminine characteristics "become more

emphasized" (Tickner 1992, 47-8). Second, this paper previously introduced ways in which war

zones offer political actors arenas for launching military interventions under the guise of

women's rights (Pratt and Richter-Devore 2011, 495-6). Lastly, scholars argue that international

interventions in war zones claiming to "empower and protect women," may supplant "the

mobilization of genuine political will and commitment" while addressing the "symptoms"

instead of the "structural root causes" of conflict (Pratt and Richter-Devore 2011, 495-6). This

instrumentalization of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda creates two main consequences: first,

it reinforces the existing militarized hegemonic masculinity paradigm; second, it exacerbates

human insecurity.

So far, this paper outlines how the international arena embodies militarized hegemonic

masculinity, how this paradigm inhibits international security organizations from successfully

addressing gender issues, and how UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda exemplify these

fundamental shortcomings. Specifically, this paper corroborates existing literature by arguing

that UNSCR 1325 and WPS function with the implicit objective of "making war safer for women" instead of reconstructing the security field's conceptualization of gender and approach to gender issues (Shepherd 2016). Now, this paper will assess the real-life security consequences of the existing militarized hegemonic masculine paradigm through a case study of UNSCR 1325 and WPS implementation in a prominent war zone: Afghanistan.

Case Study: Afghanistan

Afghanistan Introduction

Afghanistan presents itself as a great case study for UNSCR 1325 implementation for a multitude of reasons. First, Afghanistan has a long history of armed conflict, nearly fifty years, "including civil wars and" the 2001 "US invasion" (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). Additionally, Afghanistan continues to garner international attention and occupies a principal role in WPS-related discourse. In fact, roughly one year after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, "international forces," namely the US, cited the oppression of Afghan women as a "key justification" for launching "military intervention[s]" "in Afghanistan" in "late 2001," (Martin 2017, 12). As a result, the WPS agenda became a central feature of Afghanistan's "post-2001 reconstruction" (Martin 2017, 12). Since then, "Afghanistan has been the" world's largest "arena" for "gender-focused aid intervention," with outside states, other "international donors," and "their Afghan counterparts" promising to adopt "a gender perspective" and "gender mainstreaming" as key elements of policy development (Martin 2017, 8). Although the Afghan government did not adopt an official 1325-specific NAP until 2015, the government included WPS-related provisions in "national legislation, government policies, and strategies" and created structure "to address WPS related issues beginning in 2001 (NAP). For example, documents such as, "the Bonn Agreement (December 2001)," "the Constitution of Afghanistan (2003),"

"Afghanistan Compact (2006)," "National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan (2008-2018)," and "Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2008-2013) contain commitments to "gender equality" (Martin 2017, 12).

For nearly twenty years, 2001 to 2021, Afghanistan made substantial WPS advancements, largely due to the activism of Afghan women; though, most of these gains were quantitative and superficial, such as increased women's participation in political structures or the education system. However, the Taliban reseized control of the country in August 2021, resulting in what the UN calls "the world's largest humanitarian crisis" (UNWFP 2021). The reinstation of the Taliban regime triggered the instantaneous erasure of not only twenty years of WPS-related progress but the annihilation of human rights more generally; currently, the environment of Afghanistan is one in which the militarized hegemonic masculine paradigm flourishes. Therefore, Afghanistan serves as a crucial case study for domestic UNSCR 1325 implementation and global WPS dynamics. More poignantly, Afghanistan illustrates how the structural shortcomings of UNSCR 1325 predetermine the resolution's inevitable failure to generate sustainable and structural transformations.

Gender within the Afghan Context

Women represent the majority of Afghanistan's population, as long-lasting conflict in Afghanistan continues to significantly diminish the male population; however, Afghan women remain "political and economic minorit[ies]" (NAP). As previously mentioned, the Taliban decimated any advances made by women's rights movements and WPS activists when they reseized control of the country in August 2021. Although the Taliban initially promised to protect "women's rights within Sharia law," the group actively ostracizes women from "public

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life" by depriving them of their "basic rights," such as "access to education, healthcare, and employment (UN Women 2022; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).

The Malala Fund (2022) argues that the Taliban's current "gender apartheid regime" reflects the lack of "meaningful adaptation and local implementation" of UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan by the country's previous government and international actors. The following sections of this paper will first assess how Afghanistan's 2015 NAP reflects the flaws of UNSCR 1325 before examining the larger WPS context of Afghanistan and how international and domestic actors instrumentalize the agenda. Finally, this paper will discuss how the above issues led to a continuation of the status quo and exacerbated insecurity for everyone in Afghanistan, especially women.

Afghanistan's NAP

NAP Overview

Although WPS initiatives began in Afghanistan prior to the adoption of the country's NAP in June 2015, this section specifically analyzes Afghanistan's NAP as a domestic translation of UNSCR 1325. The analysis of the Afghan NAP's implementation and outcomes focuses primarily on initiatives spearheaded by the Afghan government within the timeframe of after the adoption of the NAP in 2015 to the Taliban's return to power in 2021. The following section will contextualize the NAP within Afghanistan's larger WPS environment, beginning with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 until the return of the Taliban in 2021.

Afghanistan's NAP was principally developed by Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Women, "with support from the Embassy of Finland;" arguably, placing the NAP within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrates the outward-facing nature of the plan (Karlidag 2022,

8). According to the NAP, the plan's development "followed a robust consultation process" including "many relevant" stakeholders, to "address the challenges" Afghan "women face in the aftermath of war and conflict" in the country (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). These claims evoke two significant critiques: first, the NAP adopts a post-conflict perspective even though 2015 Afghanistan was not a post-conflict country; second, the Taliban controlled approximately "40 percent of Afghan districts" during the time of the NAPs development; consequently, Afghanistan's NAP lacks the perspective of those "living under insurgency" by excluding the large proportion of the country's population living in Taliban-controlled districts (Frogh 2017). Additionally, many "women's organizations" claim that the consultation process included only a small number of "elite women in Kabul" (Frogh 2017, 5).

Notably, Afghanistan's NAP does not contain an "allocated" or approximated budget, nor are there any "financial resource consideration references" in the plan (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). However, the NAP does emphasize that the lack of set financing poses a critical "concern" for "NAP implementation and accountability (Ibid). Additionally, Afghanistan's NAP contains a timeframe of 2015 to 2022 that is further broken down into two implementation phases: 2015 to 2018 and 2019 to 2022. The next two sections will analyze the content and implementation of Afghanistan's NAP.

Content Analysis of NAP

Many scholars and activists argue that the Afghan NAP reflects the UNSCR 1325, in that it talks the talk but fails to lay the path to walk the walk. Frogh (2017) argues that the NAP sets "huge expectations" including increasing "women's inclusion in" the security sector, "elections, and judicial structures," "combating gender-based violence," and providing support for "vulnerable

women" and "refugees;" however, the plan lacks a "deep analysis of the current issues faced by women and Afghan citizens," "concrete and actionable recommendations," and clarity on what resources "the government" and "international partners" are willing to commit.

Afghanistan's NAP also mirrors UNSCR 1325's masculinized and militarized conceptualizations of gender, peace, and security. First, it is critical to note that while the NAP does not explicitly define 'gender,' nearly every reference to the term 'gender' appears "in conjunction" with references to "women" or the "men/women" dichotomy (Friman 2021, 21). In fact, the plan's binary conceptualization of gender as 'man and woman' becomes immediately clear in its epigraph:

> "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall
> be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, *man and woman*, have equal rights and
> duties before the law" (Article 22 of the Afghan Constitution).

Other references to the term 'gender' in the Afghan NAP occur in extremely "vague and broad contexts" (Friman 2021, 21). For example, abstract references to the concepts of 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender sensitivity' appear without concrete explanations of what these practices involve beyond the clear assumption that "gender" equates to "women" (Friman 2021, 21).

Gender Stereotypes: Protection and Peace

Afghanistan's NAP employs many of the same gender stereotypes as UNSCR 1325. Most prominently, the plan emphasizes that women's innate vulnerability necessitates protective action. Although the NAP mostly employs the term 'survivors' to address women, implicitly the

plan's narrative constrains women's identities to the gender stereotypes of weakness, vulnerability, and passivity. For example:

> "Women are *vulnerable* to various types of violence in conflict and post-conflict societies such as: threats, intimidation, violent attacks, rape, trafficking, and forced marriages. UNSCR 1325 recognizes that women are particularly *vulnerable* to sexual violence during conflict and post- conflict situations and calls for their *protection*" (2015, 2).

Additionally, Afghanistan's NAP addresses women within the context of traditional gender roles, particularly domesticity, by tying women's protection to respect for "family values" (2015, 23). Specifically, the plan identifies "increased awareness on respecting women and family values" as an implementation indicator for its objective of "protect[ing] women from all types of violence and discrimination" (2015, 22-3).

Additionally, the NAP adopts UNSCR 1325's securitized approach to gender justice, mainly through prosecution. For instance:

> "Providing for enabling environment for women to have access to justice through their effective participation in the judiciary" (2015, 6).

> "There is also a special EVAW Law Prosecution Unit in the Attorney General's Office that investigates and prosecutes cases of violence against women, with similar units formed at the provincial level" (2015, 4).

Like UNSCR 1325, Afghanistan's NAP also provides justification for military action in the name of women's protection. For example:

> "Increased awareness among all military personnel on how to protect women from violence. Brief all military personnel on how to protect women from sexual violence and all commanders of their responsibility to protect women" (2015, 23).

In general, the protection element of Afghanistan's NAP reflects the critical shortcoming of UNSCR 1325 by focusing on the need to protect women while ignoring the strategic connection between sexual and gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinity and completely disregarding systemic violence. Furthermore, the NAP completely neglects the vulnerability of "men or boys" and their experiences as victims, instead the plan only mentions men and boys by referencing their capacity, even duty, to engage in "fighting violence against women" (2015, 2).[8]

As this paper previously explained, the premise that women are inherently peaceful and conflict-adverse, which underlies the protection narrative, also applies to the assumption that increasing the participation of women in peace processes improves outcomes.[9] Just as UNSCR 1325, instrumentalizes gendered stereotypes of peace, the Afghanistan NAP highlights how increasing women's engagement in peace building benefits the state rather than the women themselves. A key example of this is:

> "The participation of women in peace building efforts is recognized as a prerequisite for peace and reconstruction across the country, which is of crucial importance… The Afghan Government is committed to ensuring women's representation at all levels of decision-making, with particular focus on women's role in the peace process… and acknowledges that durable peace and stability in Afghanistan requires the participation of women in political and social life" (2015, 5).

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[8] This connects to the concept within hegemonic masculinity of women's agency being reallocated to men; refer Theory Section.
[9] Refer to "Gender Constructs in Security Theory in Practice"

In addition to instrumentalizing women's engagement, the Afghan NAP also mirrors UNSCR 1325's propensity to "just add women and stir" within participation-related recommendations (Dharmapuri 2011, 65). Although Afghanistan's NAP identifies participation as its first priority, the plan repeatedly declares the criticality of "increase[ing] women's participation in peace processes and the security sector" while failing to offer "clear procedures" on how to do so, or "how to ensure a safe and enabling environment" for women's engagement (NAP 2015, 1; Frogh 2017). Just like UNSCR 1325, the Afghan NAP's primary strategy for increasing women's engagement is quotas. In fact, virtually every indicator listed in the NAP's "Actions Matrix for Implementing Agencies" takes the form of target numerical or percentage increases. Consequently, participation within the context of Afghanistan's NAP becomes purely a matter of quantity rather than quality, with women simply being added into the existing militarized hegemonic masculine environments. Similar to critiques of UNSCR 1325, the Afghan NAP's approach to participation conveys the message that placing women in "visually male" environments is "inherently radical" in itself, while ignoring "the power structures" which "inhibit women and other disadvantaged groups from" meaningfully engaging in these environments to begin with (Friman 2021, 23).

Furthermore, Afghanistan's NAP adopts a top-down approach, focusing on "high-level political involvement," with recommendations primarily promoting women's increased participation in "executive levels," "leadership positions," and "government institutions" (Francis 2018, 3). Although scholars argue that women's participation at this level is "indisputably necessary," the top-down approach largely glosses over "everyday gendered experiences and problems" (Francis 2018, 3). Consequently, Francis (2018, 4) contends that the NAP functions as an elite-centric plan by "failing to make [an] impact" outside of "a small sub-section of Afghan women" that can

"access and participate in high level political processes." Furthermore, the 'add women and stir'

approach perpetuates the instrumentalization of women by supposing "a direct causal

relationship…between the number of women" added and "positive results" (Friman 2021, 19).

Lastly, the Afghan NAP's conceptualization of prevention resembles the same paradox as

UNSCR 1325, in which a "logic of security" dominates a "logic of peace" (Shepherd 2016;

Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022, 3). In fact, the NAP asserts that the best way to prevent

"violence against women" is to "ensure" their "political participation" and "rights" (2015, 6).

Overall, the Afghan NAP's protection, participation, and prevention recommendations exemplify

the core shortcomings of the UN and UNSCR 1325: prioritizing superficial and outward-facing

advancements while disregarding structural issues and assuming that "the only way to protect

women" in conflict is to simply increase their presence in the decision-making apparatus of

heavily militarized and masculinized security structures (O'Connor 2014).

Militarism and Hegemonic Masculinity

The above section briefly addresses how Afghanistan's NAP reflects UNSCR 1325's highly

militaristic approach to gender issues, namely in its conceptualization of protection. However, a

crucial way militarism appears in the Afghan NAP is through explicit and implicit justifications

for utilizing the WPS framework for state-building, namely in the form of military power. One

example of the NAP directly connecting WPS to Afghan state-building is:

> "The UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is relevant to the current
>
> Afghan context, particularly in the state building and transitional process, women's
>
> empowerment and active political participation is of crucial importance" (2015, 5).

Additionally, Afghanistan's NAP, like UNSCR 1325, does not condemn militarism. Arguably more consequential, Afghanistan's NAP fails to "address disarmament" in general or "connect the proliferation of weapons with women's insecurity," even though the plan specifically applies to the Afghan context of "ongoing conflict" (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).[10] Furthermore, the Afghan NAP fails to address the nature of the country's on-going conflict including: the Taliban's insurgency and "brutal killings of civilians," namely women; the "radicalization of young men;" and the proliferation of "violent extremism ideologies" at "local levels" (Frogh 2017). Failing to specifically identify the forms of violence present in the country makes addressing the issues nearly impossible.

In addition to militarism, the Afghan NAP also perpetuates the principal aspects of hegemonic masculinity, such as emphasizing the oppositional nature of men and women by characterizing women as the 'other'. For instance, the plan uses the terms 'they', 'them' and 'our' when referring to women, which implies two crucial assumptions: first, men 'own' Afghanistan's NAP in the sense that they are "the normative 'standard';" second, women are "the exception," the "passive victim[s]" excluded from "the policy process" (Friman 2021, 17). Although the Afghan NAP does not directly address the concepts of masculinity and femininity, by embracing the oppositional nature of hegemonic masculinity, the Afghanistan NAP presupposes that men cannot embody women's innate traits; therefore, within this framework, men cannot be "victims," "vulnerable," or "peaceful" (Friman 2021, 21). Largely, the Afghan NAP functions as an extension of UNSCR 1325 by reifying the existing "power structure" which valorizes

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[10] In addition to perpetuating militarism, Afghanistan's NAP also implicitly marginalizes alternative perspectives, namely anti-militarism; refer to section on WPS militarism.

militarism and regards "men" as "inevitably" strong and women as inherently weak (Friman 2021, 21).

Implementation of Afghanistan's NAP

Implementation Mechanisms

As previously mentioned, the Afghan NAP's overall timeframe is 2015 to 2022 but the plan contains two internal timeframes for implementation, 2015 to 2018 and 2019 to 2022. Notably, the NAP contains a "Actions Matrix for Implementing Agencies," yet the plan directly acknowledges the insufficiency of the matrix for successful implementation (2015, 7). In fact, Afghanistan's NAP dedicates the first phase of implementation exclusively to developing "a separate implementation plan" that will build on the existing "matrices" by "clarify[ing] the responsibilities of the lead and supporting agencies," and outlining steps for "coordinat[ing], monitoring and evaluat[ing], and financing]" the plan (NAP 2015, 7). By failing to develop a comprehensive implementation mechanism before the NAP's release, the Afghan government essentially cut the timeframe of the plan in half. Arguably, not including a sufficient implementation plan indicates the Afghan government's lack of commitment to long-term commitment. In fact, the Afghan government's lack of commitment to WPS is evident in the NAP itself:

> "In the event of a deterioration of the security situation it is important to adapt the implementation of the activities to avoid the wasting of resources. Implementation of new activities in not yet covered areas should be limited or slowed down and efforts should be increased to support already on-going activities" (2015, 9).

While UNSCR 1325 is principally adopted in Afghanistan as means for international funding and recognition, the above excerpt from the Afghan NAP explicitly shows how the state's chief priority remains militarized security. To this point, the Afghanistan's Ministry of Finance did not "finalize the costing of the NAP" until 2017, "more than two years" after it was adopted, and even then, they had not finalized the "costing" breakdown between "the Afghan government" and "donors" (Frogh 2017).

Implicit throughout the Afghanistan NAP is the country's reliance on funding from international donors. For example, the plan identifies a "lack of financial resources to bear the cost" as a "potential risk/problem" for NAP implementation; subsequently, the plan offers the following mitigation measure for this risk:

> "When budgeting/costing the NAP, the Steering Committee should encourage national
> and international donors to commit to funding for the duration of the NAP. Throughout
> the course of implementation attention should be focused on seeking and raising funds
> from multiple national and international sources" (2015, 9).

During the time of the Afghan NAP's development, there were "more than 150,000 international forces" in the country "engag[ing]" in various "coalition forces," such as NATO; however, a year later there were "less than 15,000" (Frogh 2017). The steep decrease in international forces in Afghanistan had a substantially negative "impact on the level of resources" coming into the country "as part of military or development aid packages," which constitute a majority of the international funding entering Afghanistan (Frogh 2017). Notably, the Afghan government blamed "funding issues" for the plan's "stalled implementation;" however, many "women's organizations" in the country argue that additional funding should not stall implementation because previous government documents already made "gender mainstreaming" and "women's

empowerment" obligatory in the "government agencies" included in NAP implementation (Frogh 2017).[11]

For a national plan to truly be *national*, implementation at a grass-roots level is vital; however, the Afghan NAP focuses primarily on national level "policy reform, legislative initiatives," and political engagement (Francis 2018, 3). While in general top-down approaches to national plans rarely see success at the local level, the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the Taliban's active presence in the country renders state-wide implementation virtually impossible. According to research, the Taliban "control[led] or heavily influence[d]" approximately half of the country at the time of the Afghan NAP's release (Almukhtar and Yourish 2016). Regardless, the implementation plan emerging from phase one of Afghanistan's NAP fails to provide concrete strategies for local implementation and instead reflects the same quantitative and superficial goals as the initial implementation matrices, particularly prioritizing women's participation on a national level, while largely neglecting the local context (Frogh 2017; Martin 2017).

Furthermore, the Afghan NAP designates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the plan's leading actor for "implementation and monitoring;" however, the ministry continuously fails to publicize "quantitative data" pertaining to either process (Afghan Women's Network). This lack of transparency indicates a low-level of genuine will to push forward the NAP within the Afghan government. For example, studies found that the "strategies and programs" emerging from the Afghan NAP largely lack "concrete guidance, earmarked funding, or systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms" and are instead "reduced to requirements" to "include a gender component or perspective" (Martin 2017, 8). Overall, research on the implementation of

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[11] Refer to "Implementing UNSCR 1325"

Afghanistan's NAP further demonstrates the Afghan government's failure to translate rhetorical support for WPS into significant results. As outlined at the beginning of this case study, the next section will analyze implementation outcomes specifically related to the Afghan NAP, as a vehicle for UNSCR 1325 goals. The outcomes of WPS initiatives in Afghanistan beyond the direct context of the NAP will be subsequently examined.

Implementation Outcomes

First, the protection pillar of UNSCR1325 primarily focuses on the protection of women and girls in war zones and emphasizes "the issues of sexual violence and internal displacement" (O'Connor 2014). For the resolution to succeed in this regard, these issues must be adequately addressed in the NAPs of country's involved in war *and* there must be effective efforts to implement NAP recommendations on a domestic level. The adoption of Afghanistan's NAP occurred during a period of deteriorating security conditions in the country, especially for women. However, as mentioned in the previous section, the NAP does not explicitly acknowledge the context of the country's conflict, and instead mainly addresses women's protection through recommendations at the judicial and military level. Consequently, the plan fails to adequately address the protection of women, or anyone, within the context of mounting insurgency. According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, "violence against women and girls," particularly at the hands of the Taliban, became increasingly "widespread across Afghanistan," between 2012 and 2019, "with the home the most insecure place of all" (Akbari and True 2022, 4). The Commission also notes that during the same time period, the Taliban increasingly targeted "politically active women," thus obstructing "women's full…political participation" (Akbari and True 2022, 4).

In terms of participation, both the UNSCR 1325 and Afghanistan's NAP embrace the 'just add women and stir' approach of setting numerical goals and establishing quotas. Additionally, participation-related recommendations largely aim to prioritize women's engagement in ways that might benefit state security. However, an analysis of Afghan women's participation in peace talks reveals that women remain essentially absent (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Akbari and True 2022). For example, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom found that only "four women" were included in the "21-member government negotiation team" in the 2020 "intra-Afghan talks." A subsequent section further addresses the role of Afghan women in peace talks.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the Afghan NAP embraces a top-down approach that largely neglects grass-roots implementation and concentrates efforts and resources in large urban areas, mostly Kabul. In 2016, approximately "70-80 percent of Afghans" resided in "rural areas" with little to no "contact with state institutions or access to basic services;" additionally, the women in these environments "are entirely illiterate," have no "access to health and education" systems and are barred from engaging in their communities (Frogh 2017). Because the implementation structure of Afghanistan's NAP does not contain a "systematic" framework for connecting "central government" entities to "women's groups" and leaders at the grassroots level; regardless of the Afghan NAP's success at the national and executive level, the initiatives emerging from the plan did not reach a majority of the country (Frogh 2017).

Overall, an analysis of Afghan NAP-specific outcomes shows how the plan largely exists symbolically, in the form of rhetorical aspirations. However, even at the rhetoric level, progress is minimal. In fact, Frogh (2017) argues that not only does the Afghan NAP's programming and policies fail to reach most of the country, the very "idea" of the plan "remains alien" to a

majority of the country. In-country research published in 2018 reveals that "there was almost zero understanding or recognition of" WPS amongst "men and women" across Afghanistan (Francis 2018, 4). Furthermore, studies found that across the "donor community" and "implementing organizations" of Afghanistan's NAP, there is a significant "lack of understanding" of not only the "process of gender mainstreaming," but the "concept of gender" more generally (Martin 2017, 14). As previously mentioned, even though the concepts of 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender' are ill-defined within the Afghan NAP, there is a strong understanding that gender equates to women. In fact, the existing "gender programming in Afghanistan," resulting from the NAP, functions as "programming for women," while largely neglecting "the inclusion of men and boys in gender processes" and disregarding the effect of "women-centered programming on gender relations" (Martin 2017, 9).

The Background section of this paper argues that the construction of UNSCR 1325 not only sets the resolution up to fail in achieving its objectives, but also lends itself to manipulation by relevant actors. Therefore, the following section will examine the ways in which domestic and international actors instrumentalized, securitized, and weaponized the larger WPS agenda to serve their own objectives in Afghanistan.

The WPS Agenda as a Political Tool in Afghanistan

Given the prominence of UNSCR 1325 within the international arena, the WPS agenda often becomes manipulated in several ways: as a political tool to garner global recognition and legitimacy, as a political bargaining chip in state-building processes and peace negotiations, and as justification for military action and foreign intervention. WPS activity within the Afghan context exemplifies all the above scenarios. As previously outlined, the next sections will build

on the analysis of NAP-specific outlines by examining implementation of the WPS agenda in Afghanistan from 2000 to 2021.

Tool for Global Recognition and Legitimacy

The above analysis of Afghanistan's NAP illustrates how the Afghan government embraced the symbolic value UNSCR 1325 by prioritizing superficial recommendations aiming to increase women's visibility in high-level positions within the state's security apparatus. The top-down, elite- and state-centric approach of Afghanistan's NAP conveys the Afghan government's primary desire to publicly demonstrate commitment to the WPS agenda. This desire stems from Afghanistan's reliance on foreign aid. Following the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, most foreign donors began imposing WPS-funding requirements; therefore, it is safe to assume that Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid underlies the Afghan government's commitment to UNSCR 1325. Because of this, the Afghan government's incentive to pursue WPS objectives depends on the agenda's political relevancy in the international arena. For this reason, Afghanistan exemplifies the nature of NAPs in aid-dependent countries: released to secure funding and appease international pressures without any sincere intentions for substantial or long-term implementation.

In fact, research conducted by the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization in 2017 reveals that in most cases, "gender policies" in Afghanistan function as "on-paper only statements," meaning programs incorporate "a gender perspective" to meet donor requirements but do not meaningfully change "their content" or "implementation" (Martin 2017, 17). Additionally, the organization argues that "there has been little reflection" amongst the Afghan Government, "national NGOs," and "the donor community" regarding "new means of engagement on WPS" or coordination of emerging initiatives since the release of the NAP in

2015 (Martin 2017, 17). Furthermore, the Malala Fund argues that while "every western donor" in Afghanistan "since 2001" has "pushed the WPS agenda," as Afghanistan's "security situation" continued to "deteriorate," corruption increased, and superficially "promoting women's rights" became a way for donors and programs to "build assets" and "mak[e] easy money" (Akbari and True 2022, 4).

Justification for Military Action and Foreign Intervention

The background section of this paper explains how WPS militarism enables Western states to weaponize UNSCR 1325 and women's rights as justification for military action and foreign intervention. Furthermore, this paper discusses how Western actors reflect the 'white savior' complex by framing their interventions as moral missions to save "brown women" from the threat of "violent brown men" (Pratt 2013; Dames 2021; Parashur 2019; Aroussi 2017).[12] The US invasion of Afghanistan exemplifies this phenomenon. Significant amounts of literature assess how Global War on Terror (GWOT) rhetoric weaponizes the pillars of UNSCR 1325 to frame and justify the US's invasion of Afghanistan as "a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (Johnson-Freese and Markham 2022; Pratt 2013).[13] Furthermore, Akbari and True (2022) argue that in addition to concrete military action, "the WPS agenda enable[d]" "the US and its allies" to instrumentalize the pursuit for "women's freedom" as a way to "promote liberal values and influence" through "soft power while creating alliances" showcasing "their status and rank in the hierarchy of international politics." This argument connects to the neocolonial aspects of UNSCR 1325 mentioned in the Background.[14] Furthermore, this paper previously explained

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[12] Refer to "WPS Militarism and Norm Setting"

[13] Refer to "Gender Constructs in Security Theory and Practice"

[14] Western notions of equality are often tied to funding; this is further evidenced by which local entities the UN and international donors support; refer to "Implementing UNSCR 1325"

how Western countries tend to have outward-facing NAPs because they have more to gain from incorporating WPS into their foreign policies than domestic policies.[15] In the case of Afghanistan, countries such as the UK and Australia explicitly name Afghanistan as a country of focus for "actively supporting the WPS agenda" in their NAPs or other official WPS-related policies (Aroussi 2017, 35-6). This practice reflects the neocolonial aspects of UNSCR 1325 mentioned in the Background.

In addition to providing justification for foreign intervention, the WPS agenda also becomes instrumentalized by domestic and international actors within the long-term processes of state- and peace-building.

Bargaining Chip in State-Building and Peace Processes

As mentioned above, virtually every donor program in Afghanistan had WPS-related "criteria for funding;" however, a significant portion of the funding became concentrated within "gender-related themes" in state-building and "peacebuilding efforts" (Akbari and True 2022, 4). However, gender programs in these contexts primarily serve the interests of the state and the donors rather than the WPS agenda. For example, in approximately 2004, the US military established "Female Engagement Teams (FETs)" in Afghanistan, comprised of "volunteer female members of the US Marines Corps" with the goal of "develop[ing] trust-based and enduring relationships with Afghan women" (McCullough 2013). Critics argue that the reasoning underlying the creation of FETs reflects the gender stereotypes of women as vulnerable and peaceful. For instance, Shepherd (2016) argues that the all-women composition of the FETs aimed to convey "military engagement" as "non-threatening," because of women's

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[15] Refer to "Implementing UNSCR 1325"

association with peacefulness, and "civilized," because "the assumption" that the existence of the FETs reflects a high-level of "gender equality in the military," and therefore "modern civility." Similarly, while NATO adopted WPS elements into its mission in Afghanistan in 2007 (notably seven years after the mission began), scholars argue that NATO instrumentalized and securitized WPS by viewing women's participation in their forces as a strategy to foster "mutual trust" and garner public support for its counterinsurgency efforts (The Atlantic Council 2021; Pratt 2013, 778).

Furthermore, the background section of this paper explains how international forces, such as the FETs and NATO, instrumentalized women's gender to serve the larger narrative of masculinist protection" by framing their role as "sexual violence problem-solving forces," protecting "local women, from local men," and male members of international forces (Pratt 2013; Willet 2010, 152).[16] Additionally, US allies, such as Australia, claimed they were "supporting Afghan women and girls" by contributing military personnel to the FETs "to meet with Afghan women and discuss their security needs" (Shepherd 2016). However, research reveals that when international forces in Afghanistan, including FETs and NATO forces, claimed to engage with "Afghan women" in the name of UNSCR 1325, they usually did so for their own benefit; for example, engaging with Afghan women functioned as a way to gain "fresh information on Taliban supporters, the positioning of improvised explosive device (IED) tracks and redirected patrols" (Pratt 2013, 779).

Another way WPS functioned as tool of state- and peace-building was through the use of women's rights as a bargaining chip in peace negotiations between international actors, the

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[16] Refer to "WPS Militarism and Norm Setting"

Afghan government, and the Taliban. Although the international community and the Afghan government repeatedly declared their support of UNSCR 1325 and women's rights, in reality their words contradicted their actions. For instance, during the "Kabul Conference" in 2010, women activists called on "Afghan leaders and" the international community to protect their rights and not trade them "for peace" during negotiations; nevertheless, "the world leaders" at the conference chose to endorse "the reintegration of former Taliban fighters" without clarifying "how women's rights" "fit into" the "reintegration plan" (AWN). Additionally, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom found that "between 2005 and 2014," there were "23 rounds of" Afghanistan-related "peace talks;" however, "women were only included" twice. The disregard for women's concerns continued through the "US-Taliban negotiations between 2018 to 2020," in which "no Afghan women were present" and discussions related to "women's rights" were nonexistent (Akbari and True 2022, 5; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). By not including women in the peace processes, these examples also speak to the shortcomings of UNSCR 1325 participation aspirations. Furthermore, the negotiations resulted in the "Doha Agreement" of 2020, which facilitated "the withdrawal of international forces" in Afghanistan" and "the Taliban's return to power" without any "obligation or accountability" to UNSCR 1325 or "women's rights" (Akbari and True 2022, 5). Although UNSCR 1325 primarily applies to the context of warzones, the practice of bargaining away women's rights in the pursuit of peace agreements conveys the idea that human rights come second to state security.[17]

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[17] Refer to "Gender Constructs in Security Theory and Practice"

<u>Consequences</u>

Adopting Afghanistan as a case study for UNSCR 1325 implementation in a war zone illustrates not only how the resolution fails to yield significant results but also exemplifies how domestic and international actors can manipulate UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda as a political tool for their own gain. This section will examine how both of these shortcomings generate two main consequences: reinforcing the status quo (the hegemonic militarized, masculine paradigm) and exacerbating human insecurity.

A Continuation of Militarism and Hegemonic Masculinity

Without a doubt, militarism continues to dominate all aspects of life in Afghanistan. In terms of state-centric security, Afghanistan's "military spending has exceeded one third of total government spending" every year since 2010 while "less than 4 percent of government spending" goes towards "social protection," which includes every program classified as "targeting families and children," according to a 2022 UN report (Carlitz 2022, 1). For instance, Afghanistan increased its military spending by 20% in 2019, making it one of the "top 15 countries" globally with "the biggest increase" in "military expenditure;" additionally, Afghanistan placed amongst the world's "top 30 largest importers of arms" that same year (The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). Contrastingly, the Afghanistan government "spent less than 6 percent" on the "health sector," approximately "9 percent" on education, and only "4 percent on social protection" in 2019 (Carlitz 2022, 3). On an international level, the previous section outlines how Afghanistan functions as an arena for Western powers to weaponize WPS as justification for military intervention and neocolonialism. Furthermore, the actions of foreign actors in Afghanistan reify the complex power hierarchies of the international system. For instance, the instrumentalization of WPS within counterinsurgency

missions and the racialized rhetoric of the US's Global War on Terror exemplify how powerful security actors simultaneously make superficial advancements in one form of human rights, in this case women, while reinforcing other power hierarchies, such as racial and religious hierarchies (Pratt 2013).

Paradoxically, the US and its allies launched their intervention into Afghanistan under the banner of protecting Afghan women then subsequently initiated "the withdrawal of western forces" "under the guise of peace;" however, in both scenarios, the opposite happened. Scholars argue that the nature of international withdrawal from Afghanistan actually "destabilized the modest achievements" of WPS, "erased the public space of struggle for gender equality," and "paved the way" for the Taliban's new regime (Akbari and True 2022, 3). In fact, the Taliban's offensive military campaign to seize control of Afghanistan, which included "targeted killings and attacking civilians," began right as international actors started withdrawing their military personnel from the country in May 2021 (UNAMA 2022, 7). Additionally, Akbari and True (2022, 3) argue that "the evacuation process" exposed the international community's "lack of commitment to" WPS, namely the protection of "women's rights and women activists" amidst in impending "Taliban takeover." Following the Doha Agreement, the foreign WPS supporters in Afghanistan had "from February 2020 to August 2021" to develop a strategy to safeguard women's fundamental rights and "protect" WPS-related gains in Afghanistan, yet the "evacuation process" was a catastrophe (Akbari and True 2022, 6). For example, research reveals that despite the lengthy preparation timeframe, "lists of Afghan women leaders from grassroots organizations, figures from civil society groups or women professionals from governmental and non-governmental sectors" were "hastily drawn" and given to "embassies" during "the two-week evacuation itself" (Akbari and True 2022, 6).

Furthermore, the immediate actions of the Afghan people when the Taliban arrived in Kabul on August 15, 2021, indicate that the Afghan people knew that the progress towards gender equality made in recent years was superficial and that traditional conceptualizations of gender roles, and the use of violence to enforce them, were never eradicated. For example, a Malala Fund report notes that "shopkeepers broke female mannequins" and painted over the "posters of women" on their walls; additionally, "the price of Chadari or the blue Burqa tripled within a day," which the report argues reveals that "Afghan businessmen knew exactly what the Taliban's return meant" for women (Akbari and True 2022, 7). Even more poignantly, the Malala Fund report states that many Afghan women quickly deleted "their photos from social media," "deactivate[d] their accounts," and "burned their educational documents and modern clothes;" these actions indicate that the women of Afghanistan are aware that departure of international forces and the arrival of a new Taliban regime means that "they were left on their own" to suffer their new "brutal reality" (Akbari and True 2022, 7).

These findings demonstrate a critical shortcoming of the existing international security paradigm. As explained in the literature review, an increase in security for the state does not directly correlate with an increase in security for its inhabitants. The following section outlines how the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 exposed the failures of UNSCR 1325 implementation in Afghanistan from 2000 to 2021.

Exacerbated Human Insecurity

In 2022, the UN acting Special Representative for Afghanistan, Markus Potzel stated that UN monitoring "reveals that despite the improved security situation" of Afghanistan since August 15, 2021, the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls, are deprived of the full enjoyment of their human rights." In fact, the UNSCR officially addressed the severity of

Afghanistan's human rights by adopting a resolution specifically targeting the country in March 2022: UNSCR 2626 (2022):

> "Expressing its serious concern about the situation of women and girls, the imposition of restrictions on their participation in public life, and the erosion of respect for their rights, in particular through their lack of equal access to education, economic opportunities, justice and other services" (S/RES/2626 2022, 1-2).

> "Further expressing its deep concern about the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly the situation for civilians, including women, children, displaced persons, minorities, and humanitarian workers… and the number of reported serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses across the country, and stressing the importance of sustained efforts to reduce violence and that perpetrators of such violence must be held accountable" (S/RES/2626 2022, 2).

Additionally, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) published a report in July 2022 summarizing the status of human rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021 until June 2022. In terms of women's rights, the report notes that roughly a month after the Taliban gained power, "de-facto" Taliban state-authorities "effectively removed women's rights to political participation and representation in" the country's "decision-making fora," including "on matters" that directly impact "them and their families" (UNAMA 2022, 31). For example, the "de facto authorities" established an "all-male caretake cabinet" as the state's principal "decision-making forum" on September 7, 2021; subsequently, they physically took over "the premises of" Afghanistan's Ministry of Women's Affairs on September 18, 2021 and converted it to a "de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV)" (UMAMA 2022, 31). In addition to stripping women of their

political rights, de facto Taliban authorities keep Afghan women from engaging in public life and actively target the physical safety of women, and those that support them.[18]

For example, the MPVPV imposed an "Islamic hijab" regulation on May 7, 2022, requiring all women to "wear a hijab in accordance with Islam and Sharia Law" and stating that the best way for women to follow the new law is "for [them] to avoid leaving the house altogether, unless absolutely necessary" (UMAMA 2022, 32-3). Additionally, the regulation notes that "male family members" and "guardians" "will be punished for the non-compliance of female family members" (UMAMA 2022, 33). In fact, reports note many instances of Taliban officers "beating men accompanying women" who are not wearing "a face covering" or are "wearing colorful clothing" (UN 2022). Furthermore, applying this paper's theoretical framework to UN reporting of the "Islamic hijab regulation" illuminates several critical examples of the Taliban reinforcing militarized, hegemonic masculinity. First, by punishing men instead of women for offences supposedly committed by women, the Taliban eliminates women's agency. Second, by coercing "men to control the behavior, attire and movement of women," the Taliban reinforces the masculine's *power over* the feminine and normalizes the use of violence to enforce this power hierarchy (UN 2022). Third, by threatening men into committing violent actions, the Taliban enforces militarized notions of masculinity onto Afghan men and punishes those who do not comply with these expectations. In addition to normalizing gender-based violence, the de facto Taliban authorities also terminated the existing "reporting pathways, justice mechanisms, and shelters" for individuals facing "gender-based violence" (UMAMA 2022, 34).

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[18] Refer to "Gender Stereotypes and the Military"

Although the above issues hold consequences for all Afghans, the Taliban especially target women. Consequently, the Malala Fund argues that the "women and girls" of Afghanistan are currently "facing the most serious crisis of survival based on their gender" (Akbari and True 2022, 3). The Taliban continues to target Afghan women. In addition to the millions of women "imprisoned in their homes because of their gender identity," there are many women, ranging from civil society "women's rights activists" to "journalists" and "women security sector professionals and government officials" that have been "murdered" by the Taliban and thousands more remain "in hiding" (Akbari and True 2022, 3). The remarks of one former female secretary of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Intelligence heartbreakingly convey the severity of the situation:

"Suicide is my only escape from my gender vulnerability in Afghanistan and my identity under the Taliban regime" (Akbari and True 2022, 6).

Currently, Afghanistan represents "the world's largest humanitarian crisis" (UNWFP 2021). One contributing factor was the complete withdrawal of foreign aid from Afghanistan, which the country depended on for over "10 years," when the Taliban reseized power in August 2021. Presently, a majority of the Afghan population requires "humanitarian assistance," with millions "starving" and without "access" to health care; additionally, the Global Peace Index reports that increasing poverty is causing "an increase in crime rates" (Cuomo 2022). In 2022, the Global Peace Index named Afghanistan "the least peaceful country in the world" for the fourth year in a row; this paper argues that most of the factors leading to Afghanistan's current situation stem from the failure of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda (Cuomo 2022).

Although, Afghanistan made substantial, quantitative advancements towards WPS-related goals from 2001 to 2021, the almost instant reversal of those achievements with the Taliban's return to

power in August 2021, illustrates how the highly militarized and masculinized nature of UNSCR 1325 predisposes the WPS agenda to manipulation and inhibits the resolution's ability to make structural transformations. Scholars argue that reconstruction and state-building offer vital opportunities to set the standard regarding human rights; however, an analysis of WPS implementation in Afghanistan reveals the dangers of lowering the bar for human rights and justice in the face of mounting state-security challenges (Ensuring Women's Rights Video). In summary, the Malala Fund encapsulates the findings of this case study in the following question:

> "How meaningful is the WPS agenda when those who have endorsed the principles are
> prepared to trade them away to the Taliban as geopolitics shift?" (Akbari and True 2022,
> 5)

Conclusion

This paper uses a theoretical framework of radical feminism to illustrate how the international arena embodies militarized hegemonic masculinity and how this power paradigm fundamentally inhibits international security organizations from successfully addressing gender issues. Specifically, this paper corroborates existing literature by arguing that UNSCR 1325 and WPS function with the implicit objective of "making war safer for women" instead of reconstructing the security field's conceptualization of gender and approach to gender issues (Shepherd 2016). Additionally, this paper utilizes a case study of UNSCR 1325 and WPS implementation in Afghanistan to reveal how when international security organizations attempt to address gender issues, they do so in a way that not only fails to ameliorate the problems but allows political actors to co-opt the WPS agenda for individual gain. Furthermore, this paper examines how these dynamics reinforce militarism and hegemonic masculinity and contribute to the proliferation of human insecurity.

Although this paper briefly addressed the role of imperialism within the international system, future research should further examine the impact of racialized hierarchies and neocolonialism in WPS implementation and other initiatives pertaining to human security. Similarly, future research should further explore the gender constructs within hegemonic masculinity and militarism apply to non-binary and trans people within the context of security studies.

Overall, this paper argues that real progress towards gender equity and justice requires a complete deconstruction and replacement of the dominating ideologies of the international security system, including militarism, hegemonic masculinity, and imperialism.

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