Opportunity for Gendering the Responsibility to Protect Agenda at the United Nations?

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Despite its rapid diplomatic rise in the UN setting and global recognition as an established norm, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has yet to substantially incorporate gender and directly engage with the complementary Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. The article discusses this R2P limitation and ways to rectify it through capitalizing on a landmark UN annual report on R2P and cross-cutting areas of engagement with the WPS agenda. To do so, the article proceeds in three sections that mirror the three-pronged classification of overlapping knowledge projects identified for early feminist scholarship. First, the article exposes the extent and effect of masculinist bias in early R2P formulations and R2P's failure to engage explicitly with gender perspectives until the pathbreaking twelfth annual report on R2P. Second, the complementarities between the WPS, gender equality, and R2P are examined in order to highlight the commonalities seen when "adding women" to these agendas. Third, the article examines what gendering the R2P agenda at the United Nations would entail through a reconstruction of R2P that recognizes gender as an analytical and structural category. It is argued that while the progressive 2020 Annual Report on R2P will likely become the reference point for weighing what a gendered R2P agenda should look like, and will hopefully trigger a much-needed reorientation of existing R2P policies as gender-responsive, limitations remain due to three factors: the lack of gender-sensitive analysis at the United Nations, lingering analytical tensions between the WPS and R2P communities, and the current politically resistant climate, which limits a gender audit.

Introduction

2020 was a year of significant, concurrent anniversaries: the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) at the United Nations, the twentieth anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality. While recent years have seen greater attention paid to gender equality in international relations and gender is certainly increasing in prominence on the UN radar lately, it remains underrepresented in relation to R2P. Despite the swift diplomatic rise of the R2P framework in the UN setting and recognition as an established international norm, R2P has yet to explicitly incorporate gender considerations in a systematic manner and engage decisively with the substantial, and complementary, WPS agenda. Background research has, in fact, revealed important critiques of R2P as "gender-blind" (Bond and Sherret 2006; Davies and Teitt 2012; Stamnes 2012). In response, several key studies have explored ways in which WPS and gender considerations could be incorporated into the R2P framework (Bond and Sherret 2012; Dharmapuri 2013; Davies et al. 2013; Davies 2016; Bellamy and Davies 2019) and assessed how gender perspectives relate to atrocity early warning (Davies and True 2015; Davies et al. 2015; Hewitt 2016).

However, a comprehensive assessment of gendering R2P policies and practices to better respond to the gendered dynamics around atrocity crimes, which extrapolates from existing knowledge, policies, and best practices that worked in implementing the WPS agenda, is missing. In this article, I expand on existing contributions on the topic to assess ways of gendering R2P that advance gender equality and women's equal and meaningful participation in atrocity prevention and protection as essential to the R2P agenda. In particular, I examine whether the twelfth annual report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P, released in 2020 and

fittingly entitled "Prioritizing Prevention and Strengthening Response: Women and the Responsibility to Protect" has the transformative potential to generate a systematic integration of gender into the R2P framework, in order to ensure that the gendered dynamics around atrocity crimes inform R2P practice.

To do so, the article proceeds in three sections, inspired by the feminist international relations scholar V. Spike Peterson's (2004, 37) classification of early feminist scholarship along "three *overlapping* feminist knowledge projects in relation to IR," which provides the perfect mold for a comprehensive assessment of the gendering of the R2P agenda at the United Nations. Peterson (2004) describes these knowledge projects as, first, exposing the extent and effect of masculinist bias; second, attempting to rectify the systematic exclusion of women by adding women and their experiences to existing frameworks; and third, reconstructing theory by recognizing gender as an analytical and structural category. Replicating Peterson's three-pronged classification, the first section of the article exposes the extent and effect of masculinist bias in early R2P formulations, the contested meanings of R2P, and the failure of the R2P agenda at the United Nations to engage systematically, and explicitly, with gender perspectives until the 2020 Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P. The second section examines the complementarities between WPS, gender equality, and R2P to highlight the commonalities seen when "adding women" to these agendas, in order to assess the ways in which women's experiences and perspectives have incrementally been incorporated into the R2P framework at the United Nations so far. The analytical centrality of discourse is the focus in this section, via locating references to "women" and "gender" and the context in which these mentions appear alongside "R2P" in existing UN documents that map out the official narratives on R2P at the United Nations. This includes the annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P and the General Assembly, Security Council (SC),

and Human Rights Council (HRC) resolutions referencing R2P.

Third, the article examines what gendering the R2P agenda at the United Nations would entail through a reconstruction of R2P that recognizes gender as an analytical and structural category, in line with Peterson's third feminist knowledge project. In order to assess whether the 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on "Women and the R2P" carries transformational potential and generates a practice turn that will result in a deeper interrogation into the categories of male knowledge and experiences when it comes to R2P implementation, I turn to a narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews, which reveals how UN officials and advocates working on R2P and WPS assess R2P's commitment to gender. The original masculinist gaze of R2P has evolved into a framework that has incrementally become more gender-inclusive, with references to the 2020 Annual Report on R2P revealing not only some recognition of this analytical shift, but also the significant gaps remaining to be filled through more progressive change and systematic engagement with gender considerations. This section ends with a series of normative recommendations for implementing a gender-sensitive R2P agenda, extricated from interview material and the functioning knowledge, policies, and best practices on WPS implementation. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the promise and limitations of implementing a gendered approach to R2P.

For this analysis, the article adopts a mixed methods approach, using qualitative research techniques that combine primary data, secondary documents, and interview material through triangulation to interpret the meanings actors give to words, ideas, and norms (Bryman 2016). This allows for a cross-comparison between the findings from "discourse as practice" (Shepherd 2008) as mapped out in UN documents on R2P and the reality of a gender-sensitive R2P implementation in practice, extrapolated from a narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews. Critically examining R2P's engagement with gender requires paying attention to both macro- and micro-practices. First, this requires looking at the texts of successive annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P and the UN General Assembly, HRC, and the SC resolutions referencing R2P, as reflective of the broader R2P practice at the United Nations. The second section of the article includes this assessment, in line with Peterson's second knowledge project dubbed "adding women." Searching for specific mentions to "women" and "gender" in these documents and for the context in which they appear in text reveals the evolutive interpretation and importance assigned to issues related to gender and women in relation to R2P, the degree of knowledge on how gender operates at various stages of R2P-related prevention and protection efforts, and how much these issues matter for the R2P agenda. While not an exhaustive process, adding up these elements allows for a showcase of the current UN policy architecture on R2P. UN reports and resolutions are understood as following deliberations with civil society regarding R2P priorities and negotiations and debates among UN member states in the UN setting. Taken together, they expose the reference point for states and civil society agreements and parameters of the R2P agenda.

And second, examining R2P's engagement with gender, and asking in particular whether the R2P formulation from the 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General recognizes gender as an analytical category, requires assessing how these policy prescriptions and resolutions on R2P are applied and adapted at the United Nations. I conducted five in-depth, semi-structured interviews to access practices

of UN deliberations around atrocity prevention and R2P-related protection issues that necessitate a gender lens, to discuss the transformational potential of the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P, and to assess how the interviewees perceived R2P's engagement with gender. This small-scale, qualitative approach included speaking to three UN officials from the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and from UN Women, who elaborated on perceived linkages between gender, WPS, and R2P in their own work, and two advocacy experts who work on R2P, gender, and WPS from two civil society organizations involved in these debates.[1] The interviewees' stories or narratives are incorporated in the third section of the article as valid forms of insights into the assessment of R2P's engagement with gender at the United Nations. By exploring practices at the microlevel, the analysis is situated in feminist institutionalist approaches and identifies ways in which the interviewees interact with official UN frameworks designed to institutionalize and clarify global norms such as R2P. I rely on feminist institutionalism (e.g., Haastrup 2018; Bode 2020) to grasp the importance of a layered understanding of the barriers and opportunities for implementing a gender-sensitive R2P, both at the UN and state levels.

It is important to interrogate the extent of gendering global norms such as the R2P since this represents one core element of the United Nations's commitment to ensuring the prevention of, and protection from, mass atrocities. This becomes particularly salient in the context of R2P having suffered from "gender blindness." The 2020 Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P, issued on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the UN adoption of R2P, was meant to address this significant limitation. It emerged as the most comprehensive UN document on R2P to date to explicitly link the R2P and WPS agendas and firmly recognize the gendered impacts of atrocity crimes. I argue that this progressive twelfth annual report on R2P has generated a substantial window of opportunity for prioritizing prevention and placing women at the center of the R2P global agenda, while also providing some key normative recommendations to shed light on how a gender-sensitive R2P should be implemented in practice.

As such, the 2020 Annual Report on R2P will likely become the reference point for weighing what a gendered R2P agenda should look like, and will hopefully trigger a much-needed reorientation of existing R2P policies as gender-responsive in the future. That said, the current political context and structural limitations at the United Nations, which include the lack of gender-sensitive analysis and some lingering analytical tensions between the WPS and R2P communities, have so far hindered the systematic application of a gender lens to R2P implementation. This, in turn, points to the limits of a gender audit in a politically resistant climate. It also validates Peterson's (2004) argument that the analytical move toward examining gender as a structural category is neither easily accepted nor well understood.

Exposing Masculinist Bias and Gender "Blindness" in R2P

Early Signs of Masculinist Bias

Early R2P formulations expose the masculinist bias and obvious omission of women and their activities from how

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[1] The interviewees preferred that their names and positions were not to be disclosed. The anonymized interview information is included in the reference list.

the R2P was envisaged, researched, and designed. "Gender blindness," as Jennifer Bond and Laurel Sherret (2006) dubbed it, started with the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), the commission which released its "Responsibility to Protect" report in 2001, thereby coining the R2P concept. ICISS lacked gender expertise and only one of the twelve commissioners that worked on the report was female. Similarly, the same gender imbalance characterized the Commission's advisory board, with only four out of the fifteen members being women. Furthermore, out of the 2000 sources ICISS listed in its database, only seven explored gender and atrocities and only four examined women and security. The ICISS report itself reveals the same gender blindness, in that it did not include the term "gender" and it referred to "women" just three times, with none of these references recognizing women's contributions to conflict and post-conflict environments or the need to include women in these environments (Bond and Sherret 2006, 22–25).

Despite the release of the ICISS report just one year after the UN SC passed the landmark resolution 1325 on WPS, the R2P report neither engaged with any of this resolution's central messages, nor did it address the unique experiences of women and girls and their role in preventing and resolving conflicts. It is only the reference to rape that is included in the ICISS 2001 report. In fact, this frames how the ICISS R2P report referred to women as victims, and more specifically as victims of rape (ICISS 2001, 33). This is in line with "popular UN stereo types" that portray women as "victims of public crimes," a position shared by Gareth Evans, one of ICISS's two co-chairs and the individual who has been one of the most vocal supporters of R2P since ICISS was set up (Charlesworth 2010, 242–43). The ICISS report includes no references to women as active agents or to gender inequalities as possible root causes for atrocity crimes. Indeed, feminists reveal how women, activities, and constructs associated with women, as well as identities, practices, and institutions associated with women are rendered invisible once the preoccupation with men and masculinized activities takes the central stage (Peterson 2004, 37) in matters of international peace and security, where R2P operates.

The "gender blindness" affecting R2P persisted after the unanimous adoption of the concept at the United Nations in the three paragraphs (138–40) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. These three short paragraphs (UN 2005), which embody the UN version of R2P synthesized from the detailed ICISS report, do not address any gender considerations and do not include any references to women. And yet, this first General Assembly resolution on R2P represents the most authoritative representation of R2P at the United Nations (Badescu 2011). A further examination of the R2P agenda after the 2005 General Assembly resolution includes the annual UN Secretary-General's reports on the topic, released each year since 2009 (e.g., UNGA 2009), as well as other UN resolutions on R2P, including numerous SC and HRC resolutions referencing R2P, up to the most recent (and also the first thematic) HRC resolution on R2P in July 2020 (e.g., UNHRC 2020). Some of these reports and resolutions established some linkages with gender and women participation in international peace and security, as will be exposed in the next section, however never explicitly or in great detail. The dominant discourses of protection, especially in earlier formulations of R2P at the United Nations, which invoked women primarily as victims have reinforced sexist stereotypes about women's agency and the international community's paternalistic protection for women (Aoláin and Valji 2019, 55).

Despite the official narrative of R2P as mapped out conceptually through successive UN annual reports and various UN resolutions referencing R2P, controversies surrounding this normative agenda at the UN remain, with R2P's meaning being contested, and its application (or lack of) to different conflicts around the world deeply disputed (Badescu 2009; Badescu and Bergholm 2010; Newman and Stefan 2020). The three pillars of R2P, as exposed in the first annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P, are straightforward: Pillar one entails the primary responsibility of the state to protect its own population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing; Pillar two encompasses the international community's duty to assist states in upholding their R2P; and Pillar three entails the international responsibility to take timely and decisive action to protect populations from these four crimes when a state fails to do so (UNGA 2009). The challenge of implementing the three pillars of R2P in practice represents the trigger for renewed contestation surrounding R2P (e.g., Badescu 2010; Newman and Stefan 2019; Stefan 2021). This has significantly intensified after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led intervention in Libya in 2011, after SC Resolution 1973 authorized the use of force under pillar three of R2P. Criticism emerged that NATO and the United Nations had overstepped their mandates by contributing to regime change and that excessive force was used, which increased civilian casualties (Kenkel and Stefan 2016; Kreutz and Cardenas 2017; Stefan 2017). Any consideration of gender or references to women is missing from this SC resolution that authorized action in line with pillar three of R2P (UNSC 1973 2011), as has also been the case with every SC resolution that followed, which referenced pillar one of R2P.

Gender considerations have been incrementally integrated, however, in the Secretary-General's successive annual reports on R2P, as the next section will discuss. And yet, they have generally been "treated as an 'add-on'" instead of being incorporated coherently into R2P implementation strategies (Stamnes 2012, 178). However, gender violence needs to be considered when R2P implementation is contemplated. Gender violence represents "a violent enactment of a hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity where the victim is feminized and the perpetrator is masculinized" (Skjelsbæk 2013, 171), with power inherent to the feminization process (Stamnes 2012). As such, gender considerations require reflection on the different experiences of men, boys, women, and girls based on their respective priorities, roles, status, and needs in society (Dharmapuri 2013).[2]

Taking a Gender Perspective

The predominant view in gender studies is that most socially constructed notions of masculinity are highly valued, whereas aspects of femininity tend to be devalued. Gender in this context is not interchangeable with women's issues; it should not be conflated with sex and its representations along the male–female binary, and is certainly not fixed but rather varies according to context. The purpose of adopting a gender perspective is to understand the distribution of power among men and women and to establish how gender logics affect wider structures and behaviors. Gender refers to the socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity by which men and women are defined, which set

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[2]Women are of course not the only groups impacted by gender inequality and discrimination, with children, elderly, men, gay, lesbian, or transsexual populations also suffering from gender discrimination.

expectations for their roles and behaviors, and which privileges one group over the other. Gender is understood as a "historically contingent social construction that dichotomizes identities, behaviors, and expectations as masculine-feminine. . .[it] is not 'natural' or 'given' but learned" (Peterson 2004, 39).

Taking a gender perspective, also referred to as "gender-responsive[ness]" (e.g., Shepherd 2017) or "gender mainstreaming" (e.g., Charlesworth 2010), involves gender analysis,[3] which indicates that gender is used as a category of analysis to engage with gendered power to understand how power is distributed, how specific notions of gender differences are created and reinforced, how certain meanings are established, in which contexts, and with what consequences (Scott 2010, 13). Feminists explore how gender affects how we perceive international issues, including international responsibilities to protect and prevent atrocity crimes, and how we act in response to such instances. Gender is not just an empirical category but a "systematically *analytical category* that refers to constructions of (priviledged) masculinity and (devalorized) femininity and their ideological effects" (Peterson 2004, 39).

Indeed, feminists highlight the importance of using gender not as a descriptive term or technocratic tool, but as an analytical concept, which operates as a form of power in specific contexts (e.g., Cook 2016). Importantly, a gender perspective must also seek to understand how other identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, age, and disability, intersect with gender to affect the diversity of people's, and especially of women's, everyday lives and experiences (Hall and Shepherd 2013). Until very recently, this has not been explicitly scrutinized in the official UN representations of R2P, as a closer look at the specific language employed in UN documents on R2P will showcase in the next section. Prior to the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P released in 2020, which marked a sharp change and progress in this sense, taking a gender perspective was not a high priority of the R2P framework at the United Nations or elsewhere.

The R2P agenda has in fact been under much more scrutiny for its reference to gender than some of the more established UN agendas, such as the protection of civilians (POC) or children and armed conflict (CAAC), because of the *gendered nature* of the four crimes it covers. Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing all have a gendered impact. Indeed, several annual reports of the UN Secretary-General on R2P have recognized that "genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity affect men and women and girls and boys differently" (e.g., UNGA 2013, para. 32). At the same time, none of the UN documents that map out the WPS agenda have explicitly mentioned the need for R2P, as a broader thematic UN agenda, to engage with issues related to WPS, as they have done with respect to other, stronger, thematic UN agendas, such as POC or CAAC. The official narrative of WPS at the United Nations as seen, among others, in the UNSC Resolutions on the topic recognizes the need for the United Nations as a whole "to increase its attention to women, peace and security issues in all relevant thematic areas of work on its agenda, including in particular Protection of civilians in armed conflict, Post-conflict peace-building, The promotion and strengthening of the rule of

law in the maintenance of international peace and security, Peace and Security in Africa" (e.g., UNSC 2122 2013). As such, R2P has never been officially recognized as a relevant and complementary thematic agenda in WPS documents, and has not been included in similar mentions as a relevant thematic area of work. WPS supporters have yet to consider it as part of a context where WPS and R2P operate at the same level. This only highlights the urgency of the need to apply a gender lens to the R2P agenda at the United Nations.

"Adding Women" to Existing Frameworks: Gender Equality, WPS, and R2P Overlaps

Following V. Spike Peterson's (2004) portrayal of the second feminist knowledge project as attempting to rectify women's systematic exclusion by "adding women" to existing frameworks, this section turns toward the overlapping elements from the WPS, gender equality, and R2P agendas at the United Nations, in order to highlight the commonalities encountered when women are "added" to these frameworks. In turn, this exercise assists with identifying the specific contexts in which gender considerations and women's experiences and perspectives have been incorporated in key UN policy documents on R2P. This section elevates the analytical centrality of discourse by locating references to "women" and "gender," and the context in which these mentions appear alongside "R2P," in the text of relevant UN documents on R2P that shape its normative identity. This entails an examination of the specific language, which Laura Shepherd (2008) dubs "discourse as practice," used to bring these three agendas together.

I explore the discursive constitution of the R2P agenda at the United Nations as engaging with women issues and gender considerations first in the texts of the Annual Reports of the Secretary-General on R2P, which I regard as agenda-setting and reflective of the broader R2P practice at the United Nations. I also look for any references to "gender" and "women" in the UN General Assembly, HRC, and the SC resolutions referencing R2P so far. Taken together, these R2P representations showcase the current UN policy architecture on R2P. The Annual Reports of the Secretary-General on R2P are thus understood as key "vehicles for the theoretical investigation" (Shepherd 2008, 5) into agenda-setting and meaning-fixing of R2P at the United Nations, through discourses. UN reports and resolutions are understood as following deliberations with civil society regarding R2P priorities and negotiations and debates among UN member states in the UN setting. Collectively, they expose the reference point for states and civil society agreements and parameters of the R2P agenda.

Searching for specific mentions to "women" and "gender" in these documents and for the context in which they appear in text reveals the evolutive interpretation and importance assigned to issues related to gender and women in relation to R2P, the degree of knowledge on how gender operates at various stages of R2P-related prevention and protection efforts, and how much these issues matter for the R2P agenda. Ensuring that women are empirically visible is a vital undertaking, and, as Peterson noted seventeen years ago, also the most familiar and widely recognized feminist intervention in international relations. Attempting to rectify women's exclusion "inserts actual women in our picture of 'reality' and reveals women as agents and activists, as well as victims of violence and the poorest of the poor" (Peterson 2004, 38).

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[3] For an excellent discussion on the various connotations of "gender responsive" efforts versus "gender mainstreaming" and including "gender dimensions" as per broader feminist gender mainstreaming literature, and the peacebuilding discourse more specifically, see Shepherd, L. (2017), especially pages 68–103.

Complementarities between WPS, Gender Equality, and R2P

Feminist theories of normative change advance pragmatist agendas like WPS and achieving gender equality as "works in progress," with advocates, scholars, and practitioners working together with activist states to advance principles of gender equality, long-lasting peace, and international security as part of the broader agenda of incorporating gender perspectives into international peace and security (Davies and True 2019). Feminists' agendas challenging the patriarchal normative framework and the inadequate political economies underpinning institutions that govern international peace and security, such as the United Nations, are also engaging within the United Nations to transform gender power relations. Selected elements from these agendas that are covered hereafter pertain to the overlaps between R2P, WPS, and gender equality. Evaluating agenda-setting in terms of R2P's gradual engagement with gender considerations and women issues is easier when linked to commonalities identified between these agendas.

First, the complementarities between the overlapping components of the R2P and WPS respective pillar formulations provide the broader starting point for identifying women's role in supporting prevention and protection efforts within each of these interdependent pillars. R2P's three pillars include the following: the primary responsibility of a state to protect its own population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity; the international community's responsibility to assist; and the international community's responsibility to take timely and decisive action to protect populations from these four crimes when a state fails to do so (UNGA 2009). Coercive tools are available in the protection pillar of R2P, when a state manifestly fails to protect, ranging from mediation efforts, economic and political sanctions to military intervention. WPS's four core pillars originated in Resolution 1325, and are similarly interdependent, including prevention of armed conflict, women's participation in peace and security processes, protection of women during war, and inclusive relief and recovery.

The R2P three-pillar formulation complements the four pillars of the WPS agenda, with protection being the pillar that has received most attention, to date, in both frameworks. This has to do with the portrayal of women as victims in both of these normative frameworks, which can reinforce stereotypes of women as vulnerable instead of able agents of change (Charlesworth 2010; Davies, Teitt, and Nwokora 2015). As Marie O'Reilly (2019, 195) notes, it comes as no surprise that the participation pillar has received less attention within the WPS implementation than the protection pillar in policy frameworks and scholarly debates, which is certainly also the case for R2P. When it comes to the protection pillar, which is a core pillar in both WPS and R2P normative frameworks, and specifically the protection of women in conflict zones or at risk of mass atrocities, once women's perspectives are included, debates emerge about *who* is best placed to protect them. The WPS agenda connects and augments the voices of survivors of gender-based violence, refugees and displaced women and girls, and women affected by conflict, together with expert knowledge and data analysis. A gendered R2P agenda at the United Nations would need to do the same.

The WPS agenda brings women to international fora to allow them to share their knowledge and perspectives on the best ways to protect "vulnerable" populations, based on their "on-the-ground experience," and not just data analysis

and macro policy (Davies and True 2019, 5). Implementation of WPS policies led to best practices that pinpointed the need to assign protection roles to women, including military roles, and to integrate women into political and justice institutions, as well as civilian policing and negotiations of peace agreements (Davies and True 2019, 9). Women as security actors and agents of protection, at all levels, are the two categories making important contributions to atrocity prevention, as part of broader security sector efforts to protect. WPS data showed that employing women in service delivery (as police force, peacekeepers, corrections officials, court administrators) and as highest policy influencers (as legislators, judges) can translate into more gender-responsive justice systems (UNGA 2020, para. 26). Despite women remaining a distinct minority within UN peace operations, women as peacekeepers have been recognized as contributing to mission success, not least because women improve the mission's accessibility and outreach to women from host communities, which then draws on local women's knowledge of protection strategies and early warnings (UNGA 2020, para. 30).

The externalized application of WPS and R2P is another overlay of these two agendas. When R2P was invoked internationally it was usually in regard to protection tools employed in other parts of the world (Stefan 2017), similarly to the externalized application of the ten UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) related to WPS to date "elsewhere," but not to conflicts at home, which is reflective of states' willingness to engage in conflicts in other states but not look inwardly (Aoláin and Valji 2019, 57). This brings to the forefront another overlapping area, namely the nature of the crimes covered by these agendas and the recognition that sexual and gender-based violence may constitute atrocity crimes, which are the crimes covered by the R2P framework (Davies 2016; Bellamy and Davies 2019).

The recognition of the linkage between the four R2P crimes and systematic or widespread sexual and gender-based violence came early, in the first annual report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P (UNGA 2009) and continued to be acknowledged in subsequent annual reports. The twelfth annual report on R2P has significantly augmented this specific linkage when stating very categorically that "all the atrocity crimes in the responsibility to protect agenda have a gendered perspective and impact" (UNGA 2020, para. 13). The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also defines crimes against humanity as including "acts such as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence. . .," acts which may also constitute war crimes (1998, articles 7, 8). This is in line with several UN SC resolutions on WPS, including Resolution 1820, which describes rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or constitutive acts constitutive of genocide (UNSC 2008), and Resolution 2106, which further recognizes that sexual violence can itself constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, or amount to acts of genocide (UNSC 2106 2013).

Another synergy transpires from these agendas' focus on prevention, including the prevention of gender-based violence. The initial ICISS report described prevention as "the single most important dimension" of R2P (ICISS 2001, xi). In a similar vein, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (WSOD) paragraphs, which marked the adoption of R2P at the United Nations, clearly referenced preventative measures including early warning capabilities (UN 2005, para. 138). The UN Secretary-General highlighted prevention in the first annual report on R2P (UNGA 2009) and

further devoted two of the annual reports to early warning (UNGA 2010; UNGA 2018) and four other annual reports to prevention (UNGA 2013; UNGA 2017; UNGA 2019; UNGA 2020). Prevention requires an examination of conditions that fuel gender inequality within populations and societies at large (Davies et al. 2015), with gender-sensitive early warning systems being the "obvious starting point" for adding a gender lens to R2P's prevention pillar (Davies and Teitt 2012, 200).

Three of the annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P noted the importance of including gender indicators to support early warning (UNGA 2013, 2019, 2020) and the significance of gender-inclusive national prevention strategies (UNGA 2014). More specifically, three annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P highlighted the role of grassroots women's organizations in providing timely and sensitive early warning information (UNGA 2009, 2019, 2020). The most recent annual report on R2P noted that a systematic approach to preventing atrocity crimes "requires strong gender sensitive analysis with sex-disaggregated data as the basis for strategic planning and action" (UNGA 2020, para. 9). Furthermore, the adoption of UN SC Resolution 1960 (UNSC 2010), which mandated monitoring, analysis, and reporting on sexual and gender-based violence in view of prevention, together with UN SC Resolution 1888 (UNSC 2009), which encourages the adoption of gender-specific indicators, marked a positive development for the prevention pillar of WPS (Hewitt 2016, 15).

Research has shown the significant impact that gender equality, empowerment of women, and the inclusion of women in peace processes have in reducing the risk of violence, including the risk of atrocity crimes (Hudson et al. 2009; Kreutz and Cardenas 2017; UNGA 2018, para. 41; Davies and True 2019). There is a strong correlation between gender inequality and conflict risk (World Bank and UN 2018). Indeed, gender-based discrimination and gender inequality are known risk factors for atrocity crimes (UNGA 2020, para. 9), and both of these factors can increase the underlying risks associated with sexual and gender-based violence (UNGA 2020).

Furthermore, both WPS and R2P agendas at the United Nations, as mapped out in SC resolutions and annual reports of the UN Secretary-General on these topics, recognize that atrocity crimes affect men, women, girls, and boys differently (e.g., UNGA 2013, UNSC 2122 2013, para. 32). While men and boys are affected by sexual and gender-based violence too, women are overwhelmingly the majority of victims (Axworthy and Rock 2009; UNGA 2020, para. 14). Women and girls are vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes, which constitutes a grave violation of human rights, and a crime that might amount to atrocity crimes (UNGA 2020, para. 15). Another synergy between the WPS and R2P agendas relates to their shared goals of combatting impunity for the four atrocity crimes covered by R2P and ensuring justice and accountability for atrocity crimes. The Secretary-General emphasized in the twelfth annual report on R2P that ensuring accountability and redress for past and current atrocity crimes is essential for non-recurrence and prevention of violent conflict and atrocities (UNGA 2020, para. 32). This includes transitional justice mechanisms and processes, some of which are directed at sexual and gender-based violence (UNGA 2014). The WPS agenda is similarly committed to justice and accountability efforts, including accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict (UNSC 2106 2013, UNSC 2467 2019).

Rectifying the Exclusion of Women through Specific Language Inclusions

As mentioned earlier, attempting to rectify the systematic exclusion of women through "correcting androcentric bias by adding women and their experiences to existing frameworks" fits within the most familiar feminist knowledge project which asks "where are the women?" (Peterson 2004, 37). Conducting word frequency searches to establish how many times words or phrases related to "women" and "gender" are used in the annual reports on R2P, as mapping out the official R2P narratives at the United Nations, problematizes the discursive construction of R2P as gender-sensitive. It is the current conceptualizations of R2P in subsequent annual reports that inform the policy and practice of R2P. Focusing on the words that are used to inform policy is an exercise that assumes the centrality of words in meaning-making, in a world where "gender pervades language, determining how we identify, conceptualize, and communicate" (Peterson 2004, 39–40)

UNSC Resolution 2467 (UNSC 2467 2019), for instance, provides a revealing illustration of how important the inclusion of certain words is for furthering the broader WPS agenda. Arguably, the UN SC undermined women's reproductive rights when pursuing a new resolution on sexual violence that left out any direct references to sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH). While lamenting the inclusion or exclusion of a few specific words "might seem insignificant . . . the words are not there, and the words matter, because the words of each resolution represent the negotiated and agreed upon commitments of the Council at the time" (Allen and Shepherd 2019).

Identifying the discursive practices through which the "identity" of the R2P norm is shaped and adjusted in the Secretary-General's annual reports on R2P, and the various General Assembly, SC, and HRC referencing R2P is necessary when attempting to assess the extent of the formal R2P framework's engagement with gender equality and women considerations. Apart from tracing the explicit "gender" and "women" mentions in relation to R2P, problematizing in this way the discursive construction of R2P as gendered also allows for tracing how these concepts are situated vis-à-vis each other. Inspired by Laura Shepherd's "discourse as practice," this provides insights into the "before" of the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P, as well as the "after," as in how the conceptualization of R2P in the 2020 Annual Report has been taken forward (or not) into policy discussions that followed (Shepherd 2008, 9).

Earlier annual reports of the UN Secretary-General on R2P–up until the twelfth annual report of 2020–have only mentioned gender considerations tangentially and have pointed to some complementarities between WPS, gender equality, and R2P, albeit indirectly and without enough detail. This accounts for the "gender blindness" criticism (e.g., Bond and Sherret 2012; Stamnes 2012). Over the years, the annual reports have *progressively* added more references to women issues and gender, albeit not in a linear fashion, with some annual reports, in fact, making zero references to women (UNGA 2010, 2012) or gender (UNGA 2012). They also established more interconnections between these agendas as the years went by, culminating with the 2020 Annual Report as the most comprehensive one to date to conceptually link gender, WPS, and R2P. The number of specific mentions to gender and women in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P reveals the degree of knowledge on how gender operates at all stages of R2P-related prevention and protection efforts, how much these issues matter,

and whether they are regarded as intrinsic parts of the R2P agenda or just add-ons. Also, clear and specific terminology included in the annual reports is meant to guide policy and practices on R2P at the United Nations and draw attention to the inclusion of gender considerations and the role of women as central to R2P implementation.

For reference, the first Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P entitled "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect" included five references to gender, mostly in relation to "gender-based violence." It also mentioned women six times: when portraying women as playing key roles in early warning and human rights protection, as part of women grass roots organizations, women's groups, and also in relation to the need for investigations into how states protect women's rights (UNGA 2009, paras. 3, 15, 26, 59); and in regard to the sexual exploitation of women and girls (UNGA 2009, para. 25). The following year's report, however, made zero references to women and included only one reference to gender in the context of "sexual and gender-based violence" (UNGA 2010, para. 12). Similarly, the 2011 Annual Report mentioned gender only once, in the same context of "sexual and gender-based violence" (UNGA 2011, para. 26), and mentioned women twice, when portraying women as victims, in need of protection (UNGA 2011, para. 26), and also when discussing the need to partner with women's groups to ensure mass atrocity prevention (UNGA 2011, para. 12).

While the 2012 Annual Report on R2P made zero references to either women or gender, the following two years' reports—namely the 2013 and the 2014 Annual Reports—included more mentions. This marks a high in the upward curve suggesting an increased importance placed on conceptualizing issues related to gender and women in relation to R2P, prior to another deep in the 2015 and 2016 reports. The fifth annual report (UNGA 2013) included three references to gender in the context of risks associated with "sexual and gender-based violence" (para. 19). It also mentioned women six times, when acknowledging that mass atrocities affect women and girls differently (UNGA 2013, para. 32), and that women's participation is needed in peace processes and early resolution of tensions (UNGA 2013, paras. 32, 61). The sixth annual report (UNGA 2014) referenced gender six times, in the context of efforts to tackle "sexual and gender-based violence" (UNGA 2014, paras. 21, 58) and included eight references to women, the highest number of mentions yet, when discussing violence against women and girls (UNGA 2014, para. 58), the role of women and women's groups in efforts to prevent or respond to atrocity crimes (UNGA 2014, paras. 15, 27), and in support of women protection advisers (UNGA 2014, para. 69).

The discursive construction of R2P as evidenced through the 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports of the Secretary-General on R2P showed a decline in the level of critical engagement with the concepts of gender and women. The 2015 Annual Report only referenced gender once and women four times, with the latter in the context of the protection of women (UNGA 2015, para. 33), women as a vulnerable group (UNGA 2015, para. 15), and to argue in favor of women empowerment (UNGA 2015, para. 60) and including women's voices in early warning efforts (UNGA 2015, para. 31). The 2016 Annual Report referred to gender twice in the context of "sexual and gender-based violence" (UNGA 2016, paras. 8, 59), and it also mentioned women twice, once in a footnote in regard to UN Women and the second time when referring to "women's empowerment" as one way to reduce the scourge of atrocity crimes (UNGA 2016, para. 7).

The understanding of how gender operates at various stages of R2P-related prevention and protection efforts gradually deepened in the following four reports. There was just one reference to gender in the 2017 Annual Report on R2P, in a footnote on the risk of "systematic sexual and gender-based violence" (UNGA 2017, 14), and seven references to women, including the need for women's perspectives in risk assessments and measures designed to close atrocity prevention gaps (UNGA 2017, para. 25). The 2018 Annual Report on R2P mentioned women ten times, including important calls for strengthening women's role in the prevention of atrocity crimes, women's equal representation in peace processes, and empowering women as agents of atrocity prevention (UNGA 2018, paras. 6, 41, 49g). It also referenced gender four times, in the context of pursuing gender equality (UNGA 2018, para. 41) and ending gender discrimination (UNGA 2018, para. 48g). The 2019 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P mentioned women eleven times, including a reference to the effectiveness of atrocity prevention as being determined, among other factors, by the inclusion of women (UNGA 2019, para. 30), the need to include women as part of early warning and prevention measures (UNGA 2019, para. 18). It also referred to gender five times, when highlighting the importance of "gender equality in access to justice" and "conducting national assessments of risk and resilience that are gender-sensitive" (UNGA 2019, paras. 16b, 32).

The sharp rise in the number of references to women and gender considerations in the 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P, entitled "Prioritizing Prevention and Strengthening Response: Women and the Responsibility to Protect," heralds a significant turning point in the understanding of how much these issues matter for R2P in the UN context of agenda-setting. The 192 references to women and 73 references to gender in this twelfth annual report, incorporated in a much more comprehensive way compared to all previous cumulative formulations from earlier annual reports, allow for a holistic outlook on the ways in which discourses of protection and security "reproduce grammatically correct narratives of identity and being-in-the-world" (Shepherd 2008, 73). This report fixes the meaning of R2P as inherently intertwined with women and gender considerations when it clearly articulates its specific goal to clarify and outline the "interconnections between implementing the R2P and advancing gender equality as well as the WPS agenda. This will help to better understand and respond to the gendered dynamics around atrocity crimes" (UNGA 2020, para. 5).

Increased inclusivity and participation of women were framed in the 2020 Report as part of the movement to improve the R2P's so-called bottom-up approach, with the channeling of a stronger focus on gender inclusivity aimed at ultimately improving a bottom-up approach to atrocity prevention. It was not until this landmark twelfth annual report on R2P that the UN Secretary-General explicitly acknowledged the interconnections between implementing the R2P, gender equality, and WPS agendas.[4] Instead of portraying women primarily as either victims of sexual violence or inclusive, natural peacemakers (Bond and Sherret 2012), the R2P agenda—as (re)produced in this 2020 Report—captures the full range of complex roles that women play in prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery mechanisms at the United Nations (UNGA 2020). Prior

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[4] The very purpose of this anniversary, twelfth, annual report of the UNSG on R2P was to specifically outline these linkages in order to empower women as agents of atrocity prevention and "to understand and respond to the gendered dynamics around atrocity crimes" (UNGA 2020, para. 5).

to this, several annual reports of the UN Secretary-General have each recognized dispersed roles played by women, such as women's roles in resolving tensions among communities through intercommunal dialogue (UNGA 2015), women's roles in refuting incitement to violence and hate speech (UNGA 2013, 2019), as well as women's equal participation in decision-making and peace processes (UNGA 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018).

Apart from the UN Secretary-General's thematic reports on the topic, the UN General Assembly, HRC, and the SC resolutions referencing WPS and R2P are also reflective of the broader practice surrounding these agendas at the United Nations. The UN HRC's 2020 resolution on R2P, which was the Council's first thematic resolution on R2P and marked the "Fifteenth Anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect Populations from Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes against Humanity," represents the most recent UN development on R2P at the time of writing. However, this anniversary resolution includes no references to gender considerations or women's needs and roles in prevention and protection from mass atrocities (UN HRC 2020).

In fact, this complete lack of any references to gender or women considerations in relation to the R2P thematic agenda characterizes all UN SC and General Assembly resolutions referencing R2P, to date. The texts of the 92 UN SC resolutions (GCR2P 2021) that reference R2P at the time of writing refer to the responsibility of the state to protect all populations, across its territory, from the four crimes under the R2P jurisdiction, but includes zero references to women or gender. This is the case for *all* SC resolutions and Presidential Statements referencing R2P to date, which cover a wide range of contexts, including South Sudan, Sudan, Central African Republic, Mali, Syria, Somalia, The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (e.g., UNSC 2363 2017), and several thematic agendas as well. A few examples of the latter include Peace and Security in Africa (UNSC 2349 2017), Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (UNSC 2419 2018), Silencing the Guns in Africa (UNSC 2457 2019), and Maintenance of International Peace and Security (UNSC 2250 2015).

Concurrently, none of the UN annual reports of the Secretary-General on WPS have ever referenced the R2P. This is also the case with the most recent report, which marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of SC Resolution 1325 (UNSC 2000), and warns that trends and progress point to a risk of "losing hard-fought gains on gender equality and peace" (UN 2020a, para. 7). Ten UN SC resolutions to date provide the foundation of the complex WPS agenda at the United Nations and were passed between 2000 and 2019 to strengthen women's participation, protection, and rights, from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction. Similar to the UN Annual Reports on WPS, none of these ten SC resolutions pertaining to WPS make any reference to R2P either.[5]

While references to R2P are missing from these conceptualizations that map out the WPS agenda at the United Nations, the references to WPS and gender in the most recent annual reports on R2P, and especially in the twelfth report of 2020, are reflective of attempts to intertwine these agendas, on the part of R2P supporters. However, in line with Peterson's (2004) second feminist project of "adding women," gendering R2P would require much more

than simply adding women's knowledge, perspectives, and women's participation in conflict prevention, protection, and rebuilding. Adopting a gender perspective must also investigate how social structures and institutions reinforce notions of gender that harm gender equality goals and work against reaching a more gender-equitable R2P agenda (Stamnes 2012). Indeed, "adding women" does translate into a deeper interrogation and a more profound rethinking of the categories that are biased toward male experiences and male knowledge claims. In turn, this forces us to move into what Peterson (2004, 39) dubs the third feminist knowledge project, namely reconstructing theory.

Peterson's Third Feminist Project: Rethinking R2P by Recognizing Gender as an Analytical and Structural Category

Rethinking R2P occurs when the significance of gender in how we conceptualize issues of peace, protection, and international security takes the center stage. "Mainstreaming" a gender perspective into R2P requires an investigation into the logics and practices of gender and their effects on people operating within or affected by the broader R2P framework. In V. Spike Peterson's (2004, 40) words, this process entails "a shift from 'adding' empirically to 'rethinking' analytically". It is therefore not enough to examine ways in which women's experiences and presence can be included at every step of prevention, protection, and post-conflict rebuilding, relief, and recovery. We need to go beyond "adding" women *empirically* to "rethinking" the R2P agenda *analytically* so that gender is incorporated in a systematic manner across the entire spectrum of R2P policies and practices. It is this aspect of rethinking R2P that this section turns to, with the aim of exploring whether the path-breaking 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P has triggered a reconstruction of R2P in practice that is more sensitive to gender as an analytical category. This entails assessing the "after" of the conceptualization of R2P from the 2020 Annual Report in the current political climate, as in whether a gender-sensitive R2P has been taken forward, or not, into policy discussions.

Inspired by the promise of micropolitics, which seeks out the agency of individuals (Solomon and Steele 2017), I conducted semi-structured interviews to access practices of UN deliberations around atrocity prevention and R2P-related protection issues that necessitate a gender lens, to discuss the transformational potential of the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P, and to assess how the interviewees' perceived R2P's engagement with gender.[6] By exploring practices at the microlevel, the analysis is situated in feminist institutionalist approaches and identifies ways in which the interviewees interact with official UN frameworks designed to institutionalize and clarify global norms, such as R2P. A narrative analysis approach to semi-structured interviews acknowledges that translating policy recommendations into practice is directly related to how well the "*analytical move* of 'examining gender'" (Peterson 2004, 43) is understood by those whose jobs are to translate a gender-sensitive R2P into practice. Using the policy design and updates on implementation from the texts of annual reports and resolutions on R2P allows for a showcase of the current UN policy architecture on R2P, which shapes the everyday practices of those individuals engaging with R2P. UN reports

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[5] These include: SCR 1325 (2000), SCR 1820 (2008), SCR 1888 (2009), SCR 1889 (2009), SCR 1960 (2010), SCR 2106 (2013), SCR 2122 (2013), SCR 2242 (2015), SCR 2467 (2019), and SCR 2493 (2019).

[6] Qualitative methods at the microlevel ensure the interviewees' stories or narratives are treated as valid forms of insights into the assessment of R2P's engagement with gender at the United Nations.

and resolutions follow deliberations with civil society regarding priorities concerning the R2P agenda, as well as negotiations and debates among member states, in the UN setting. Taken together, they expose the *reference point* not only for individual practices of those engaging with R2P, but also for states and civil society agreements and parameters of R2P.[7]

I rely on feminist institutionalism (Haastrup 2018; Thomson 2019; Bode 2020) to grasp the importance of a layered understanding of the opportunities and barriers to implementing a gender-sensitive R2P, both at the UN and state levels. This also illustrates the institutional positioning of R2P, to assess its relative power as conceptualized in the 2020 Annual Report and the various pressures and limitations that impact it. Contextualizing the practices that emerge from interviewees' stories with relevant academic insights and narrative analysis reveals the elements that might hinder the gendering of the R2P agenda at the United Nations.

A Politically Resistant Climate

The progressive 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P, entitled "Prioritizing Prevention and Strengthening Response: Women and the Responsibility to Protect," provided a significant window of opportunity for engaging women and incorporating gender into R2P practices. This twelfth annual report on R2P is the most comprehensive UN document to date to explicitly link the R2P and WPS agendas and firmly recognize the gendered impacts of atrocity crimes (UNGA 2020). It is pathbreaking in its clarity around the gender dynamics of atrocity crimes, in recognizing women's multiple and vital roles in supporting the prevention and protection agendas, and the importance of empowering women (UNGA 2020). The report notes that strengthening atrocity prevention "will only be possible if women participate equally and meaningfully in decision making, conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, protection, transitional justice, reconciliation and peacebuilding, and other political processes" (UNGA 2020, para. 22). In fact, the 2020 Annual Report on R2P tackles the "gender-blindness" limitation head-on and places gender *at the center* of R2P implementation. In other words, this twelfth annual report heralds the beginning of the end of "gender blindness" for R2P. While this points to the official recognition that greater integration of gender into the practice of R2P is necessary, implementation is lagging and it is very hard to come across examples where the gender dimensions of atrocity crimes have been considered by states in references to R2P since the release of the 2020 Secretary-General's Report on R2P.

The state-level discussion and engagement in the UN General Assembly, the SC, and the HRC have been disappointing, with the 2020 Report's recommendations not taken forward in any of these sites of reference to the R2P agenda. In fact, by the most unfortunate turn of events, 2020 was the first time in twelve years when UN member states have not debated the 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General in the General Assembly, due to changes triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The resistant political climate and state-level barriers are further illustrated in the formulation of the first-ever thematic HRC resolution on R2P, entitled "Fifteenth anniversary of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleans-

ing and crimes against humanity, as enshrined in the World Summit Outcome of 2005." Adopted in July 2020, during the fifteenth anniversary year of R2P at the United Nations, this thematic resolution does not include any references to women or gender (UNHRC 2020), despite this being precisely the conceptual focus of the 2020 anniversary year annual report. States from the core group within the Group of Friends of R2P that worked hard toward reaching this resolution were not interested in including such references (Interviewee E 2021), while UN women were busy in Geneva with the two HRC resolutions from 2020 related to WPS, and not really interested in supporting inclusion of references to gender and women in an R2P thematic HRC resolution (Interviewee C 2021). All other UN resolutions that followed the release of the 2020 Annual Report that referenced R2P have been void of any gender considerations.

R2P itself appears under threat in today's political climate, with the UN SC and other UN organs deeply divided over issues related to international security and protection, and rising nationalism and xenophobia around the world. At the same time, states seem to neglect their global responsibilities and show disregard for international humanitarian law in conflicts ranging from Yemen to Syria, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Four of the interviewees I spoke to pointed to the international political environment of the last few years, and especially to the 2020 political climate, with its sharp rise in populist authoritarianism and extremism, which has led to a backlash against gender equality and feminist agendas. This certainly included a backlash against normative agendas that require the United Nations to apply a gender lens to the responsibility to prevent and respond to mass atrocities (Interviewees A, B, D, E 2021).

The current political context makes gender audits difficult worldwide. Gender inequality has only worsened in 2020 during the COVID-19 global pandemic, with the United Nations estimating that the "pandemic has erased decades of progress towards gender equality" (Guterres 2021a). As the UN Secretary-General António Guterres put it, "COVID-19 is a crisis with a woman's face," with "a devastating impact on women and girls" and reflective of the deeply embedded gender inequalities in the world's political, social, and economic systems (Guterres 2021b). In March 2021, Guterres recognized that the pandemic has sparked what he dubbed "a shadow epidemic of violence against women worldwide," accelerating harmful practices from child marriage to sexual abuse and gender-based violence (Guterres 2021b). The present political stalemate follows the patterns Peterson explores in her third feminist project, where anti-feminist sentiments marginalize any feminist insights and interventions of the type seen in a gendering R2P exercise, and efforts to "analytically and structurally exposing how gender operates. . .[are] thoroughly disruptive" (Peterson 2004, 42).

Lacking Gender-Sensitive Analysis

While "adding women" to existing frameworks is relatively acceptable, legitimate, and appears to add knowledge without disrupting the status quo, the extensive rethinking that is required to clearly understand the systemic implications of taking gender seriously involves resistance to rethinking methods and indicators, and reframing normative agendas within the UN Secretariat (Interviewee D 2021; Interviewee E 2021; see also Peterson 2004, 43). Gendering R2P in policy and practice requires gender expertise to conduct gender-sensitive analysis that recognizes the "multiple roles that women and girls play in the contexts of genocide and mass

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[7] For analyses of WPS resolutions as informing the WPS practice and the discursive parameters of the WPS agenda, see, for instance, Shepherd, L.J. (2011), Shepherd, L. 2013, Puechguirbal, N. (2010), and Duncanson, C. (2019).

atrocities as victims, bystanders, perpetrators, protectors and peacemakers" (Bellamy and Davies 2019, 595). The UNSC acknowledged that gender-sensitive research and data collection are needed (UNSC 2242 2015). And yet, the WPS practitioners have found monitoring and evaluation challenging, with guidance and best practices lacking. Reports pointed to the need for inclusion of gender perspectives in the development and implementation of policy at the United Nations, in a much more thorough manner than currently done in review and decision-making (UN 2017a). There is a responsibility to prevent mass atrocities, which suggests a responsibility to address its root causes, of which gender inequality is one critical dimension. Data collection for early warning and risk assessment is the first element in the prevention pillar that is shared by both R2P and WPS agendas. Including gender inequality measures in early warning frameworks and risk assessments for genocide and mass atrocities are needed in order to determine how prior patterns of gender inequality trigger gender-based violence (Davies et al. 2015).

One of the key recommendations in the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on R2P was to develop gender-sensitive early warning indicators (UNGA 2020). As one analyst working on gender and WPS put it, "gender-sensitive early warning indicators is the hook to bring the R2P and WPS agendas together (Interviewee D 2021). And yet, as two of the interviewees working on WPS pointed out, "we are so far behind in gender-sensitive early warning indicators" (Interviewee C 2021; Interviewee D 2021). As one analyst suggested, for early warning systems, "usually the only two indicators are the number of women in parliament and changing rates of sexual and gender-based violence. And these are certainly not going to give you any warning for imminent violence … also there is too much emphasis on just sexual and gender-based violence" (Interviewee D 2021). Gathering accurate and representative data is critical to understanding, preventing, and responding to mass atrocities. Identifying causal patterns of gendered violence through building on existing indicators of gender discrimination was shown to contribute to better understanding and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Davies and True 2015). For example, where gender oppression may increase and impunity for SGBV may increasingly be the norm, "the lack of any reports (especially prior to the onset of conflict) may actually be indicative of widespread and systematic SGBV rather than evidence that it has not occurred" (Davies and True 2015, 507). Incorporating new sets of warning signs and asking how gender operates in each micro, meso, and macro context, in conjunction with other forms of identity assertion, would benefit from more comprehensive gender relations warning signs.

The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the R2P developed the only UN tool to identify the risk of atrocities in particular countries. However, given the centrality of gender to atrocity prevention, it is deeply problematic that this UN *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* makes only one reference to gender, as a form of discrimination, and includes just two references to women, once in regard to risk factor 7, on enabling circumstances or actions that are conducive to the commission of atrocity crimes, including "acts of violence against women. . .or. . .conditions that facilitate acts of sexual violence" (UN 2014, 16), and the second time under risk factor 10, in regard to the intent to destroy a protected group, including the "development of policies or measures that seriously affect the reproductive rights of women" (UN 2014, 19). As such, the *Framework of Analysis* does not capture targeted violence against women, as recently seen in

Afghanistan, South Sudan, or Myanmar, and it refers to early warning systems that fall short of gender-sensitive analysis. At the moment, this is a far cry from a proper framework of reference for atrocity risk assessments, with an inadequate inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators.

Despite the 2020 Annual Report clearly acknowledging that mass atrocities have a gendered dimension by their nature (UNGA 2020), the UN Office has yet to show any inclination to "demasculinize" the *Framework of Analysis* and engage in "critical self-reflection" (Peterson 2004, 42). This is problematic when new UN documents, such as *The Protection of Civilian in UN Peacekeeping Handbook* released by the Department of Peace Operations in 2020, reference the *Framework of Analysis* as the authoritative and comprehensive reference point for including indicators of atrocity crimes (UN 2020b, 92–93). The European Union's own *EU Responsibility to Protect—Atrocity Prevention Toolkit* could be used as a source of inspiration, as it refers to gender-sensitive indicators eight times and references women three times, including in relation to structural risk indicators and ways to respond to imminent warning signs of atrocity (EU 2018).[8]

In general, the UN is lacking a thorough set of guidelines to conduct proper gender analysis or gender-sensitive research (Donnelly 2021) and displays an insufficient understanding of gender-based analysis as an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and nonbinary people may experience policies, programs, and initiatives differently (Martin-Brûlé et al. 2020, 2). Two interviewees engaging with the WPS agenda suggested that existing UN gender analyses tend to simplistically equate it to the inclusion of women, conflate gender and sex-related issues, and lack any modeling of aggregated gender-sensitive data (Interviewee C 2021; Interviewee D 2021). Analysts note that it is challenging to find UN experts who understand gender and the specific requirements of what a gender perspective looks like, and also how to apply it to specific crises (Martin-Brûlé et al. 2020). Despite having several mechanisms in place to bring together representatives from UN departments and agencies (e.g., the Executive Committee, Regional Monthly Review [RMR], Integrated task forces), these focus on information sharing and activity coordination rather than on predictive analysis and assessment of a specific situation. They also do not incorporate systematic and integrated situational awareness analysis processes (Willmot 2017, 42).

Engaging with gender when it comes to protection agendas and conflict prevention should be "less about the numbers and more about policy changes that allow for gender data to be included, and for gender-sensitive investigations to take place" (Interviewee C 2021). Some substantive changes to existing models and research agendas are needed to engage in gender-based analysis and to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programming at the United Nations that pertain to prevention of, and protection from, mass atrocities, and to address the current gap in the production of integrated, predictive analysis, and assessment products (Martin-Brûlé et al. 2020). However, as Peterson (2004, 42) noted with respect to her third feminist

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[8] It is also problematic when individual states' own assessment frameworks for atrocity prevention do not include any gender considerations or indicators, with the United States' *Atrocity Assessment Framework: Supplemental Guidance to State/USAID Conflict Assessment Frameworks* (2015) as an example in point (this *Atrocity Assessment Framework* was produced by the US Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with assistance from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and includes no references to gender or women in its nine-page coverage of atrocity assessment criteria and triggers for atrocity risks).

project of engaging with gender analytically, this is likely to disturb "foundational concepts, conventional dichotomies, familiar explanations" and therefore, likely to be met with resistance, both at the state level and within the UN Secretariat where these changes would need to be employed. Until gender is integrated in a meaningful way within early warning risk indicators of atrocity crimes, and gender perspectives are systematically integrated in the peace and security analyses and processes across the UN Secretariat, a systematic engagement with gender as an analytical category will remain simply a policy commitment highlighted in the twelfth annual report on R2P.

Some Analytical Tensions

A solution-focused approach needs to address the larger question of how to move beyond the analytical tensions between the WPS and R2P communities, which is not going to be possible without a meaningful commitment to incorporating gender into all discussions pertaining to the prevention of, and protection from, mass atrocities. The 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P does just that, to such a comprehensive extent that, as one interviewee put it, "the 2020 Annual Report on R2P reads just like one of the Secretary-General's Annual Reports on Women, Peace and Security" (Interviewee C 2021).

When WPS practitioners engage with the R2P agenda, most considerations of R2P remain mired in questions around the usefulness of the concept and the political tensions it triggers (Interview C 2021; Interview D 2021). As evident from not only the desk research, but also the interviews I conducted for this article, this is similar to how debates among feminists appear to match differences between scholars and activists. While the former are more inclined to scrutinize the premises of feminist theory, highlight the diversity of women, and tackle inconsistencies, the latter (either in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or institutions adopting feminist agendas) tend to associate feminism with getting more women involved in decision-making, focus on achieving the bigger political goals, and deploy somewhat essentialized images of women (Charlesworth and Rimmer 2010).

As one interviewee noted, the main problem WPS advocates have with R2P is "this idea that R2P always calls for military intervention. And the bulk of WPS advocates will describe themselves as activists, but also as pacifists, so the whole agenda is about reducing military spending, arms embargoes, reducing the spread of small arms, and really reducing military action at all costs" (Interviewee D 2021). In fact, R2P, as applied in the Libyan context in 2011, came up in two of my interviews with WPS analysts: the NATO-led intervention in Libya reiterated the thinking that R2P is "a justification for military intervention" (Interviewee C 2021; Interviewee D 2021).

While the focus on "security" for both the R2P and WPS agendas represents an area of overlap in the respective UN Secretary-General's annual reports, a security focus is deeply problematic for some WPS advocates. The WPS approach is that "security needs women, as much as women need security" and it emphasizes ways in which gender equality and women's rights contribute to international peace and security, thus turning into vested interests for national and international leaders (Hudson 2010, 9). In fact, the WPS agenda has at its core the depiction of gender equality and women's empowerment as critical to international peace and security (UNSC 2122 2013) and several annual reports on WPS have reiterated the linkages between elements of the agenda

and international peace and security (e.g., UN 2020a). However, as an analyst working on gender and WPS pointed out, "there are some in the WPS community who are very uncomfortable with any sort of efforts to engage with the security sector, to participate in discussions related to security-sector reform," which includes some very prominent members of the WPS community (Interviewee D 2021).

Another analytical tension relates to R2P being a state-centric approach, where protection as in R2P's pillar one, the primary responsibility of a state to protect its populations from mass atrocities, requires a responsible *state*. WPS practitioners point to some conceptual challenges in overlapping protection elements between the two agendas, which are triggered by some inherent contradictions within the R2P framework. For instance, R2P is committed to restoring "sovereign authority," and yet the state is not always going to guarantee the protection of women (Hall and Shepherd 2013, 75–76). This is the case even if "sovereignty as responsibility" indicates that states have an obligation to guarantee women's protection (e.g., Hewitt 2016). A thorough understanding of R2P at UN Women and engagement with the R2P framework is key since UN Women coordinates the UN Secretariat's network of departmental gender focal points and provides guidance on policies and emerging issues. Sharing best practices and data is needed if gender is to become an analytical focus of the R2P agenda at the United Nations. It is then paramount for supporters of R2P, and in particular for the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P within the Secretariat, to tackle some of the analytical tensions WPS advocates still identify in the R2P framework.

Conclusion: The Promise and Limitations of Implementing a Gendered Approach to R2P

In this article, I look at one significant limitation that has affected the R2P framework until recently, namely, its piecemeal attention to gender. I argue that the progressive 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on R2P will likely become the reference point for weighing what a gendered R2P agenda should look like, which will hopefully trigger a much-needed reorientation of existing R2P policies as gender-responsive. V. Spike Peterson's (2004) classification of early feminist scholarship along "three overlapping feminist knowledge projects" was this article's inspiration for assessing ways of gendering R2P that advance gender equality and women's equal and meaningful participation in atrocity prevention and protection as essential to the R2P agenda. Replicating Peterson's three-pronged classification, the first section of the article exposes the extent and effect of masculinist bias in early R2P formulations, and the failure of the R2P agenda at the United Nations to engage systematically with gender perspectives until the 2020 Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P. The second section matches Peterson's second knowledge project— "adding women"—against the complementarities between WPS, gender equality, and R2P. Situating R2P within these commonalities allows for an examination of the gradual engagement with women and gender considerations in the official UN formulations on R2P, through an analysis of "discourse as practice" of the texts of successive annual reports of the Secretary-General on R2P and various resolutions referencing R2P to date. The third section relates the analysis of the engagement with the 2020 Annual Report on R2P in practice to Peterson's third project of incorporating gender as an analytical category.

This analysis shows that the progressive 2020 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on R2P, which places women

at the core of the R2P agenda and provides concrete recommendations for how a gender perspective of R2P may look like in practice, opened a substantial window of opportunity for implementing a gender-sensitive R2P agenda. In the months following the release of the 2020 Secretary-General Annual Report on R2P, there has been some engagement with the language of gender and women's empowerment in the UN normative framework on prevention of, and protection from, mass atrocities, but less capacity building and engagement toward identifying policies and methods to give this language life on the ground. While the conceptualization of R2P has indeed "evolved" through its gender-centric, normative representation in the twelfth annual report on R2P, the effects of this conceptual update have so far been muted. Indeed, the original masculinist gaze of R2P has evolved into a framework that has incrementally become more gender-inclusive. References to the 2020 Annual Report on R2P reveal not only some recognition of this analytical shift, but also the gaps remaining to be filled through more progressive change and systematic engagement with gender considerations.

The current political context and structural limitations at the United Nations have so far been the main culprits in hindering the systematic application of a gender lens to R2P implementation. This, in turn, points to the limits of a gender audit in a politically resistant climate. The state-level engagement in the UN setting with a gender-sensitive R2P agenda, as envisaged in the progressive 2020 Annual Report, has been disappointing. The reluctance of other UN entities, especially supporters of WPS to engage with R2P, is similarly limiting. As is the lack of understanding of how to do gender analysis and employ gender-sensitive early warning indicators. Taken together, these limitations point to a political stalemate that validates Peterson's (2004) argument that the analytical move toward examining gender as a structural category is neither easily accepted nor well understood.

While only limited progress is feasible in the current political climate, it is also important to acknowledge R2P as a "work in progress" project, whose commitment to systematically engage with gender considerations has only just commenced. Indeed, the timeframe that passed since the release of the 2020 Annual Report on "Women and R2P" includes months where lots of other normative projects have either slowed down or been put on hold to prioritize responding to a global pandemic. The twelfth report of the Secretary-General on R2P captures the newly negotiated space that R2P could occupy at the United Nations as intersecting with established agendas like WPS, but a meaningful redesign of R2P that is gender-sensitive requires a shift not only within the United Nations, but also within the states that support R2P.

Acknowledgments

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