

# Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches to nuclear weapons policy: a study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty

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The past decade has seen a push for implementation of a 'gender-sensitive' approach to nuclear policy-making.<sup>1</sup> Institutions such as the UN, governments including those of Canada, Ireland and Sweden, and many think tanks and civil society organizations have promoted this agenda. Diplomatic statements in nuclear policy forums increasingly contain mentions of the importance of gender sensitivity in nuclear policy. The 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is the first international treaty to acknowledge in its text the gendered nature of the impact of nuclear weapons and mandates gender-sensitive remediation provisions for nuclear harms.<sup>2</sup> Yet the meaning and requirements of a gender-sensitive approach in the nuclear policy field, and the intersection of such an approach with nuclear policy outcomes, remain unclear and have not yet been the subject of academic study. In this article, we provide an analysis of the recent emergence of gender-sensitive approaches within the politics of nuclear weapons, looking specifically at the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). By conducting an examination of five years' worth of NPT documents, we investigate how the official NPT discourse understands what a gender-sensitive approach to nuclear weapons policy means and requires.

Any attempt at political action, such as the inclusion of gender sensitivity in the NPT, that claims the achievement of progress—and often also legitimacy and political capital—through proclaiming increased inclusivity and the acknowledgement of differential impacts of nuclear weapons should be scrutinized with attention to what it upholds and what it challenges.<sup>3</sup> This article provides a basis on which to examine the connections and disconnections between gender, gender-sensitive

\* This article is part of a special section in the July 2022 issue of *International Affairs*, 'Feminist interrogations of global nuclear politics', guest-edited by Catherine Eschle and Shine Choi.

<sup>1</sup> There is some variation in the terms used in the documents, including 'gender-sensitive approach', 'gender lens' and 'gender perspective'. For the purposes of this article, we use the term 'gender-sensitive approach' while noting differences where relevant.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the TPNW is available at <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 27 May 2022.)

<sup>3</sup> For work exploring legitimacy and nuclear weapons, see Laura Considine, 'Contests of legitimacy and value: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the logic of prohibition', *International Affairs* 95: 5, 2019, pp. 1075–92; Kjølvi Egeland, 'Who stole disarmament? History and nostalgia in nuclear abolition discourse', *International Affairs* 96: 5, 2020, pp. 1387–1403; Sidra Hamidi, 'Constructing nuclear responsibility in US–India relations', *International Affairs* 98: 2, 2022, pp. 707–25.

approaches and imagined political outcomes in the nuclear politics discourse, and what these tell us about the structures of power from which the increasing inclusion of gender emerges. The findings of this study also have significance beyond the NPT, illuminating the broader dynamics of 'gendering' international security spaces.

We take an intersectional feminist approach to our analysis of the 'gendering' of nuclear policy spaces. This is informed by a nascent body of work on nuclear politics, grounded in decolonial feminist thought, that considers 'the intersections of gender with racialised and colonial hierarchies in the maintenance and contestation of the global nuclear order', as well as the relations of these dynamics with class, sexuality and disability.<sup>4</sup> This approach also draws on literature that has brought postcolonial critique to the idea of global nuclear order,<sup>5</sup> and developed the concept of 'nuclear colonialism' as a means of understanding the production and maintenance of this order through colonial structures of domination.<sup>6</sup> We accept Hooper's premise that international politics and war-making are constituted by and constituting of multiple masculinities.<sup>7</sup> To this extent, we understand the gendered state as both maintained by and maintaining gender dynamics in international politics. As such, our feminist approach understands the NPT as one of the 'gendered constructions, products of patriarchal hierarchies that reinforce the power imbalances across genders', that form the institutions of international security.<sup>8</sup>

Through an analysis of NPT texts, we find that the dominant understanding of 'gender' is as an individual, socially constructed binary characteristic. We further find that a 'gender-sensitive approach' includes, first, a general and often unspecified assertion of the need to include 'gender perspectives', 'gender consciousness' or a 'gender lens', and second, a call for greater participation by women in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. While some documents advocate taking a 'gender lens' to policy, it is often with an implicit assumption that those policies, and the NPT as an institution, are not already gendered. Any constitutive role of gender within the making of nuclear weapons politics goes unmentioned. Through further coding of the NPT texts, we identify three characteristics of the

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Eschle, 'Racism, colonialism and transnational solidarity in feminist anti-nuclear activism', research note, *DEP: Deportate, Esuli, Profughe*, 2020 no. 41–2, p. 67; Ray Acheson, *Banning the bomb, smashing the patriarchy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021); Anne Sisson Runyan, 'Disposable waste, lands and bodies under Canada's gendered nuclear colonialism', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20: 1, 2018, pp. 24–38; Runa Das, 'Broadening the security paradigm: Indian women, anti-nuclear activism, and visions of a sustainable future', *Women's Studies International Forum* 30: 1, 2007, pp. 1–15; Runa Das, 'Encountering Hindutva, interrogating religious nationalism and (en)gendering a Hindu patriarchy in India's nuclear policies', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8: 3, 2006, pp. 370–93; Teresia K. Teaiwa, 'Bikinis and other S/Pacific n/oceans', *Contemporary Pacific* 6: 1, 1994, pp. 87–109.

<sup>5</sup> Shampa Biswas, *Nuclear desire: power and the postcolonial nuclear order* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Danielle Endres, 'The rhetoric of nuclear colonialism: rhetorical exclusion of American Indian arguments in the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste siting decision', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6: 1, 2009, pp. 39–60.

<sup>7</sup> Charlotte Hooper, *Manly states: masculinities, international relations and gender politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Andrea den Boer and Ingvild Bode, 'Gendering security: connecting theory and practice', *Global Society* 32: 4, 2018, pp. 365–73.

'gendering' of the NPT: (1) men and masculinity are mostly absent; (2) women's inclusion is centred, while at the same time women are discursively separated from the NPT space as outsiders; and (3) bringing gender to the NPT review cycle discourse is presented as a solution to institutional efficiency challenges, with women as resources for improved NPT outcomes and, ultimately, 'effective peace'.<sup>9</sup> The interplay between these characteristics constitutes the institutionalization of gender sensitivity in the nuclear policy space.

Our analysis also shows that the institutionalization of gender perspectives has been developed for the most part within the context of states' Women, Peace and Security (WPS) obligations.<sup>10</sup> This is despite the fact that the issue of nuclear weapons has been largely left out of WPS agendas so far, though there is potential to discuss nuclear weapons through WPS prevention and participation pillars. While there are advantages to using WPS as a means to encourage consideration of gender perspectives, we argue that framing the question of gender and nuclear weapons through WPS further encourages the focus on women's participation as *the* issue of gender. As a result, the NPT discourse is subject to the same challenge identified by those who have criticized the focus of WPS on the inclusion of women as resources in the reproduction of global structures of power constituted through 'gendered, racialized, and sexualized hierarchies'.<sup>11</sup> We argue that the form of inclusion produced in the discourse on gendering the NPT rests on erasing differences among women by constructing 'women' as a homogeneous group. This group is then rhetorically excluded, positioning 'women' as outsiders to the NPT that need to be 'included'. The focus on the inclusion of women through their rhetorical exclusion ignores all the women already within the NPT processes, as well as the existing gendered dynamics that shape the possibility and nature of women's participation in the non-proliferation and disarmament policy space.

Connected to this point is a lack of discussion in the texts of what nuclear weapons specifically mean for thinking about gender and security. This is a conspicuous absence in a discourse that, to a large extent, is interchangeable with any set of official texts on gender and security policy, in that gender-sensitive approaches are centred on equality and inclusion, rather than gendered approaches to nuclear policy. This current focus leads to an approach to gender that, while asserting the potential role of women as change-makers challenging the status quo, envisions including gender perspectives as a means to improve the efficiency of the existing practices of the NPT. Such an approach provides less space to gain a better understanding of how and why gender is already at work in nuclear

<sup>9</sup> Hanna Muehlenhoff, 'Victims, soldiers, peacemakers and caretakers: the neoliberal constitution of women in the EU's security policy', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19: 2, 2017, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview on UN resolutions and state obligations on WPS, see [https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/global-norms-and-standards#\\_WPS\\_resolutions](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/global-norms-and-standards#_WPS_resolutions).

<sup>11</sup> Nicola Pratt, 'Reconceptualizing gender and reinscribing racial-sexual boundaries in international security: the case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security"', *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 4, 2013, p. 780. For work focusing more on contestation within WPS, see Jacqui True and Antje Wiener, 'Everyone wants (a) peace: the dynamics of rhetoric and practice on "Women, Peace and Security"', *International Affairs* 95: 3, 2019, pp. 553–74.

policy, and what it means and requires for nuclear politics to consider gender in a meaningful way. Our findings suggest that there is a need for those advocating gender-sensitive approaches to consider what are the possibilities and parameters of including such approaches in the realm of nuclear weapons politics, on a more fundamental level than has previously been done.

The article first conducts a brief overview of the actors engaged in bringing gender-sensitive approaches to the nuclear policy space. We then conduct an analysis of five years' worth of NPT documents with a view to their inclusion of gender-sensitive approaches and set out three core themes of this discourse. Finally, we draw conclusions for further work on gendering the nuclear policy space.

## Gender and nuclear weapons in the nuclear policy space

Multiple connected developments have provided the context for the move to include gender-sensitive approaches in nuclear policy-making, which is linked to a broader institutionalization of gender in the structures, processes and spaces of international security over recent decades.<sup>12</sup> The WPS agenda has provided one impetus, as have UN General Assembly Resolutions in 2010 and 2012 on 'Women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation' and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The recent Humanitarian Initiative and the TPNW have highlighted the gendered effects of nuclear weapons. This includes the increased dangers of ionizing radiation for people with a uterus, and the gendered physical and psychological impacts, stigma and discrimination caused by nuclear use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as decades of nuclear production and testing.<sup>13</sup>

The move towards gender sensitivity is visible in increased gender programming across the nuclear weapons policy community.<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Gender and Disarmament programme is linked to achieving both the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the WPS agenda. It aims to find 'synergies' between the goals of gender equality and sustainable development, and the processes of arms control and disarmament.<sup>15</sup> Further, the programme works on identifying progress in gender balance across non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. UNIDIR has worked with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in centring gender

<sup>12</sup> Den Boer and Bode, 'Gendering security'.

<sup>13</sup> Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølsv Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, *Still behind the curve* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.37559/WMD/19/gen2>; see also International Committee of the Red Cross, *Humanitarian impacts and risks of use of nuclear weapons*, Aug. 2020, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/humanitarian-impacts-and-risks-use-nuclear-weapons>.

<sup>14</sup> We understand this to mean individuals and organizations that address the politics of nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, nuclear disarmament, nuclear security, nuclear deterrence and related topics, including research institutions, NGOs, national agencies and international institutions. This transnational community is mainly western and particularly US-based, and plays a large role in shaping the international nuclear policy space on political questions of non-proliferation and disarmament.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Myrntinen, *Connecting the dots: arms control, disarmament and the Women Peace and Security agenda* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2020).

perspectives.<sup>16</sup> UNODA's commitment to gender perspectives focuses on gender parity and women's participation, capacity-building for the integration of gender perspectives in disarmament, institutional capacity-building within the UNODA for gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of intersectional gender analysis.<sup>17</sup> It is also framed in terms of the WPS agenda and the 2030 Agenda. The current UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, has been a vocal proponent of these issues, emphasizing the benefits of women's inclusion in nuclear policy.

To date, programmes and projects have focused mainly on gender equity, diversity, and inclusion at the organizational level within nuclear policy institutions, as opposed to the application of a gender lens to nuclear weapons policy. Women's participation has been foregrounded through initiatives offering opportunities for young women to enter the nuclear policy realm. For example, the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium initiative 'Young Women in Non-proliferation and Disarmament Mentorship' offers mentoring and career development opportunities, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) scholarship for Peace and Security provides scholarships for 'female young professionals' for in-person training led by the OSCE and UNODA on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. Further initiatives include the Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy (GCNP), launched in 2018, which calls upon its membership of 70 organizations, including philanthropic foundations, NGOs and think tanks, private-sector and government contractors, academic institutions, and grassroots and advocacy organizations, to adopt a 'Panel Parity Pledge' requiring leaders to refuse to participate in single-sex panel events.<sup>18</sup> Each organization is also asked to develop three commitments to advance gender equality within its own work. The network draws upon these pledges and commitments to foster a public accountability framework to encourage leaders of organizations to keep progress on gender on the leadership agenda. The British American Security Information Council (BASIC), Chatham House and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy have also developed a 'Gender, think-tanks and international affairs' toolkit, which responds to the ongoing issues of discrimination and under-representation of women in the sector.<sup>19</sup>

While diverse representation within the nuclear policy community remains an important goal, by centring women's entry into the field—rather than their current experiences in these spaces—these activities have not fully addressed the barriers to women's agency once they are within the nuclear policy community. In 1993, Carol Cohn predicted that the increased inclusion of women in national

<sup>16</sup> The UNODA and UNIDIR jointly organized an online event titled 'Integrating gender perspectives into the NPT Review Process' in April 2021.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), *UNODA gender policy 2021–2025* (New York, 2021), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/unoda-gender-policy-2021-2025/>.

<sup>18</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Gender champions in nuclear policy, tested by crisis: impact report 2020*, 2021, [https://www.nti.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GCNP\\_Impact\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.nti.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GCNP_Impact_Report_2020.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Laura Dunkley, Marissa Conway and Marion Messmer, *Gender, think-tanks and international affairs: a toolkit* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy and British American Security Information Council, 2021).

security and ‘war-making’ would not instigate a sudden shift in the direction of defence policy.<sup>20</sup> Cohn posited that ‘it is the commitment and ability to develop, explore, re-think and revalue [those] ways of thinking that get silenced and devalued that would make a difference’.<sup>21</sup> This idea has been investigated in the US context through research conducted by Heather Hurlburt and colleagues, who use the term ‘consensual straitjacket’ to describe the challenges of participating in nuclear policy as a woman. They show how women entering the policy space have assimilated hegemonically masculine discourses to maintain their positions.<sup>22</sup> Participants in the study spoke of ‘mastering the orthodoxy’ of nuclear policy by abandoning arguments for nuclear disarmament owing to its association with femininity, and favouring instead aggressive deterrence postures to undergo the ‘rites of passage’ and be accepted into a male space.<sup>23</sup> This study, though specific to the US policy environment, demonstrates that the inclusion of women itself says little about what progress might be made towards expressed non-proliferation and disarmament goals, or the potential for women to be ‘change-makers’ in a previously discursively coded space. As things stand, activities in the name of gender have only minimally responded to these dynamics.

Funding for gender-sensitive approaches in the nuclear policy space has come from a variety of individual states and organizations. For instance, the EU, through the European Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium (EUNPDC), has funded think-tank work on gender including events and initiatives led by the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.<sup>24</sup> BASIC has gained funding from Canada and Norway for its Gender, Youth and Diversity programme. Meanwhile, UNODA and UNIDIR have received support from Canada, Costa Rica, Ireland, Namibia, the Philippines and Sweden.<sup>25</sup> In 2017 the Ploughshares Fund launched the ‘Women’s Initiative’ to support women’s inclusion and diversity in the field.<sup>26</sup> Activities supported by this funding have converged on multiple ad hoc events focused on inclusion in nuclear policy. These events often bring together the same individuals and organizations, debating issues such as the importance of including women and, to a currently limited extent, the importance of intersectional approaches to gender questions. The ad hoc nature of these conversations speaks to a more systemic challenge of sustainable funding on gender work, which is low compared with that on other programme areas such

<sup>20</sup> Carol Cohn, ‘Wars, wimps and women: talking gender and thinking war’, in Miriam G. Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds, *Gendering war talk* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 227–48.

<sup>21</sup> Cohn, ‘Wars, wimps and women’, p. 239.

<sup>22</sup> Heather Hurlburt, Elena Souris, Alexandra Star and Elizabeth Weingarten, ‘The “consensual straitjacket”: four decades of women in nuclear security’, *New America*, March 2019, pp. 1–54, <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/the-consensual-straitjacket-four-decades-of-women-in-nuclear-security/>.

<sup>23</sup> Hurlburt et al. ‘The “consensual straitjacket”’, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Activities have included an ad hoc seminar on ‘Gender in disarmament and non-proliferation’ (April 2022) and the EUNPDC’s ‘Young Women and Next Generation Initiative’ (ongoing).

<sup>25</sup> See UNIDIR, *Gender, development and nuclear weapons: shared goals, shared concerns*, 2016, <https://unidir.org/publication/gender-development-and-nuclear-weapons-shared-goals-shared-concerns>.

<sup>26</sup> This programme, now renamed ‘Equity Rises’, has changed its focus to include race and disability, and is one example of funder activity expanding from gender to broader issues of inclusion: see <https://ploughshares.org/equityrises>.

as nuclear risk reduction, arms control and emerging technologies. In this way, gender programmes have become conditioned by the hardship of trying to exist within the broader landscape of the nuclear policy community and non-proliferation complex,<sup>27</sup> placing limits on the capacity for these programmes to instigate radical creativity or change.

For now, gender provides a palatable, low-risk funding pathway. The example of Canada as a funder of gender-sensitive approaches provides insight on why this might be the case for some state actors.<sup>28</sup> In 2017, Canada's minister of international development announced Canada's adoption of a Feminist International Assistance Policy.<sup>29</sup> The step refocused assistance priorities on gender equality and women's empowerment as chief concerns within Canada's action on global issues. In the context of this change, the Canadian minister of foreign affairs emphasized 'feminism and the promotion of the rights of women and girls' as key tenets of Canadian national values.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, Canada is a member of NATO and, as such, a member of a nuclear alliance that accepts nuclear deterrence as a provider of its security. Canada is publicly committed to the values of a feminist foreign policy, and simultaneously committed to nuclear deterrence through NATO membership. The question of how and whether these commitments can ever be reconciled is significant. Supporting gender-sensitive approaches to nuclear weapons that focus more on women's inclusion and gender equality than on interrogations of nuclear policy through a feminist lens does not require Canada to default on its commitments to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence while continuing to 'live' its professed feminist values. Sweden has also been a funder of programming on gender-sensitive approaches to nuclear policy and has a feminist foreign policy (FFP). If Sweden becomes a NATO member it will also have to square its role in a nuclear alliance with its FFP and existing positions on nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup>

The question of whether a gender-sensitive approach can fit into a nuclear policy space whose core institutions rely on an acceptance of the practice of nuclear deterrence, and if so how, is one that has so far been avoided. There has been little debate on whether meaningfully gendering nuclear weapons policy requires questioning whether the current global nuclear order and calls for gender sensitivity can be reconciled. The example of the TPNW is illustrative of the tension at the heart of the task of meaningfully bringing gender to nuclear weapons policy. The text of the TPNW emphasizes the gendered nature of the effects of nuclear weapons in the differentiated physiological, psychological and social impacts of the past and potential future uses of nuclear weapons, in language that has now made its way into other policy forums. The TPNW offers a solution to such

<sup>27</sup> Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The nonproliferation complex', *Ethics and International Affairs* 27: 3, 2013, pp. 329–48.

<sup>28</sup> Other key states funding gender work such as Ireland and Namibia have ratified the TPNW.

<sup>29</sup> Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's international assistance policy: #heroiceherchoice*, (Ottawa, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Global Affairs Canada, *Message from the minister of foreign affairs in Canada's international assistance policy* (Ottawa, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Mats Engstrom, 'Adapting ally: Sweden's bid for NATO membership', *European Council on Foreign Relations Commentary*, 17 May 2022, <https://ecfr.eu/article/adapting-ally-swedens-bid-for-nato-membership/>.

gendered harms in the total prohibition of nuclear weapons and gender-sensitive remediation. As such, the TPNW can sidestep the challenges of including gendered security in a nuclear weapons policy forum as its purpose is nuclear weapons abolition. Much of the rest of the nuclear governance infrastructure, however, is either implicitly or explicitly based on an acceptance of nuclear weapons in the world (even if this acceptance is notionally time-limited) and therefore on the continuing practice of nuclear deterrence, a practice that has been shown to produce gendered harms. Taking seriously a commitment to gender approaches requires questioning the status quo and how the current nuclear order reproduces gendered harms. Yet the current funding landscape for gender work, the complex and conflicting commitments of institutions and the discursive challenges of participating in conversations about nuclear policy suggest that the potential for contestation of the nuclear status quo through gender-sensitive approaches should be questioned. Accordingly, we seek to investigate further whether the emergence of gender talk in the institutions of global nuclear politics works to reaffirm existing ideas about nuclear weapons or to constitute new ones. Does the framing of gender in the nuclear policy community support Cohn's assertion that 'gender discourse deters thought'?<sup>32</sup>

## Methods

The article takes the NPT as its case-study for an analysis of gender discourse. Examining the texts from one institution over a five-year time-frame allows for an in-depth, context-specific qualitative reading. The NPT is a suitable case to examine because of its central position in nuclear politics: 191 states have joined the NPT, more than any other arms control/disarmament agreement, and it is often termed the 'cornerstone' of the nuclear governance architecture and awarded exceptional status in nuclear diplomacy.<sup>33</sup> The NPT is also a valuable case because multiple states and institutional actors have recently attempted to include a discussion of gender in its processes. The NPT provisions mandate a review conference (RevCon) every five years to examine the progress made in achieving the treaty's goals and set out steps for the future. These meetings set the broader tone for the international diplomatic agenda on non-proliferation and disarmament. Leading up to the RevCon are three preparatory committees (PrepComs) at which the agenda and format of the review cycle is set. These events thus provide an extensive range of policy texts to study.

We conducted our analysis on 49 NPT texts gathered from the official documents of the proceedings of the review cycle following the 2015 RevCon (2016–20). This included the 2017, 2018 and 2019 PrepComs. We first examined all available texts from 2016–2020 on the UN NPT website for any mention of key terms—'gender', 'men' and 'women' and their variations—and conducted our analysis on all texts

<sup>32</sup> Cohn, 'Wars, wimps and women', p. 236.

<sup>33</sup> Laura Considine, *The importance of narrative in nuclear policymaking: a study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, EUNPDC Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers no. 72, Jan. 2021.

that mentioned these terms. The texts include 43 state documents, including statements and both individual and joint working papers; four documents from the chair of the PrepComs; and two statements from UNODA at NPT side-events on gender. We accessed these through the UN NPT website.<sup>34</sup>

We began with an initial coding of these texts to identify key themes and terms, then asked how these texts understand what 'gender' is (either implicitly or explicitly stated), how they understand what a 'gender-sensitive' approach is, and how gender is represented in relation to the NPT and to nuclear weapons. We followed Bacchi's 'what's the problem?' approach,<sup>35</sup> asking how the texts advocating the inclusion of gender set out precisely what the problem was that a gender-sensitive approach would 'solve'. We also paid attention to where the mentions of gender were in the texts and what other issues they were linked to. Some of the documents were relatively brief statements that included gender only as one point among many and, as such, did not go into much detail. Yet these documents were still revealing in their expressions of how they conceived of gender and its place in relation to the work of the NPT and the issue of nuclear weapons.

### *Gender-sensitive approaches in the NPT review cycle*

Reading the documents for how they understand what 'gender' and a 'gender-sensitive approach' mean illuminated a general lack of detail and a periodic lack of clarity. This was not unexpected, given the nature of the documents, but what proved particularly interesting was to note which aspects of a 'gender-sensitive approach' were specified and which were left vague. Almost all documents split up what 'including gender' means into two parts: first, a general assertion of the need to include 'gender perspectives', 'gender consciousness' or a 'gender lens', and second, a call for greater women's participation in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. A statement from Australia encouraging 'the awareness of the need of gender perspectives and equal representation' and the similar assertion by the EU that 'promotion of gender equality, gender consciousness and empowerment of women remains a priority for the EU' are indicative of the content of many texts.<sup>36</sup>

What is understood by 'gender' in the documents is rarely explicitly specified. Implicitly, the understanding is that gender equals women, a point which will be discussed in more detail below. The few documents that set out what gender means take the standard UN Women definition of gender as the 'roles, relationships, attributes and opportunities that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women', and state that a gender analysis 'examines the relationships between women, men, girls and boys, including their access to and control

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt-review-conferences/>.

<sup>35</sup> Carol Bacchi, *Women, policy and politics: the construction of policy problems* (London: Sage, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Australia, 'Statement for general debate, second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)', Geneva, 23 April–4 May 2018; European Union, 'General statement, Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), first session, Vienna, 2–12 May 2017'.

of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other'.<sup>37</sup> This understands gender as an individual, socially constructed characteristic and as a binary.

Our reading of the documents identified three central themes we explore below: the absence of men and masculinity; women as outsiders to be included; and women as a resource for peace.

### *Paraphrasing Enloe: where are the men?*

Men and masculinity are rarely mentioned across the documents except in the context of the need to include women *as well as* men, for example in the repeated language in the 2017 and 2018 chair's summary reports and the 2019 chair's recommendation stating the 'importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men'.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the documents there are few mentions of men except for in contrast to the needs for and of women. In one 2019 working paper by UNIDIR and others, men are mentioned in terms of differentiated access to resources and impacts of policy on men vs women.<sup>39</sup> In another working paper on gender equality, UNIDIR and others recommend encouraging majority male delegations to redress their gender imbalances.<sup>40</sup> Men as gendered individuals are thus recognized in these instances, but there is no mention of masculinity or of men except in relation to women or women's inclusion. Yet the documents also implicitly acknowledge that the NPT has been a male-dominated space by repeatedly asserting that women have been systemically under-represented, particularly at senior levels. The NPT is thus a space that is masculine and dominated by men, while at the same time a genderless space that needs to be 'gendered' by adding women. Men and masculinity are, as such, both dominant and absent in this discussion. This conflation of 'gender' with 'women' is certainly not unique to the NPT; it is common across security policy areas in which men are 'usually invisible: an unmarked category' in gender-based initiatives.<sup>41</sup>

There is a supposition in the documents that the gender-sensitive approach is bringing gender into the NPT—gendering a previously ungendered space.<sup>42</sup> Multiple states repeat the importance of bringing a gender-sensitive approach to the NPT in terms of increasing the number of women participants in NPT processes, increasing gender equality and diversity, and acknowledging the differ-

<sup>37</sup> Working paper submitted by UNIDIR, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia and Sweden, *Integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> See PrepCom chair documents: NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.40, May 2017; NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.41, 16 May 2018; NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.49, 10 May 2019.

<sup>39</sup> UNIDIR et al., *Integrating gender perspectives*.

<sup>40</sup> Working paper submitted by UNIDIR, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia and Sweden, *Improving gender equality and diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process*, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.25, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Hannah Wright, "'Masculinities perspectives': advancing a radical Women, Peace and Security agenda?," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22: 5, 2020, p. 655.

<sup>42</sup> One exception is the UNIDIR et al. working paper that mentions the need for 'general appreciation among multilateral practitioners of the ways in which the substantive issues they deal with are often gendered': UNIDIR et al., *Integrating gender perspectives*.

entiated impacts of nuclear weapons on 'women and girls'.<sup>43</sup> These include the heightened impacts of ionizing radiation, which several texts argue needs to be 'recognized' in the NPT review process.<sup>44</sup> Mentions of this gendered difference use the verbs 'recognize' or 'note',<sup>45</sup> and it is worth considering what can or should happen after this point has been noted and recognized within the confines of the NPT. What are the consequences for nuclear weapons politics generally and for the NPT specifically of 'recognizing' this gendered difference?

Many of the documents link their inclusion of gender and the role of women's participation in the nuclear policy field to the WPS agenda and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.<sup>46</sup> The focus on increasing women's representation as the central aim of gender-sensitive approaches in the NPT is similar to the development of the WPS agenda, in which there has been much focus on the pillar of participation. For Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd, the heavy emphasis placed on participation across the WPS agenda serves to 'reify essentialist notions about women and their assumed pacific nature or their capacities for consensual problem-solving'.<sup>47</sup> They posit that WPS establishes an assumption that women's participation will lead directly to peaceful outcomes, an assumption that is also evident in the NPT discourse.

### *Including through exclusion: women as outsiders in the NPT*

While men are simultaneously dominant and absent in the NPT discourse, increasing women's participation is central to calls for gender sensitivity. Women are portrayed as vital in making further progress in nuclear diplomacy, with statements such as the EU's assertion that 'active and equal partnership and leadership of women in decision-making and action will be crucial in achieving further progress on nuclear disarmament'.<sup>48</sup> A statement by the Nordic group argues that the 'lack of gender equality has hampered the field of disarmament and non-proliferation for far too long'.<sup>49</sup> Women are thus seen as crucial elements in the non-proliferation and disarmament process, whose 'creativity and passion' are credited with

<sup>43</sup> This includes statements by Australia, the EU, the Vienna Group, Jamaica, the Netherlands and Sweden.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. in PrepCom Chair documents NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.49 and NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.41; UNIDIR et al., *Integrating gender perspectives*; working paper by Ireland, *Impact and empowerment: the role of gender in the NPT*, presented to the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and session, Geneva, 23 April–4 May 2018; statement by the New Agenda Coalition to the Third PrepCom to the 2020 NPT Review Conference 2019.

<sup>45</sup> As can be seen in the PrepCom chair documents NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.49 and NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.41; in a working paper by Ireland, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.48; and in statements by, among others, Brazil, Jamaica and the New Agenda Coalition.

<sup>46</sup> This is mentioned in the PrepCom chairs' documents NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.49, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.40 and NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.41, as well as in statements by the EU and by various states. There are some mentions of the calls for gender parity in the 2018 UN Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament also, but WPS is the main institutional reference point.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs* 92: 2, 2016, pp. 373–92; see also Wright, "'Masculinities perspectives'", p. 655; Den Boer and Bode, 'Gendering security'.

<sup>48</sup> EU statement on Cluster I issues by Ms Anne Kempainen, Geneva, 25 April 2018.

<sup>49</sup> General statement by the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, 2nd session, Geneva, 23 April–4 May 2018.

a catalytic capacity to reignite the NPT process.<sup>50</sup> This presents a new iteration of the essentialist trope conflating women unreflectively with peace and, implicitly, men with violence, overlooking the work done by multiple femininities and masculinities within gender distinctions.<sup>51</sup> Such language is based on the premise that ‘adding women’ will fix the NPT; that making the field more diverse (and adding women is often equated to ‘diversity’ in a way that will be further explored below) will somehow of itself lead to better policy, as illustrated in the statement from Ireland that ‘the participation and engagement of women is not simply a “nice to have”, but rather, a “must have”; essential if we are to achieve meaningful progress on our collective goals’.<sup>52</sup> We are not contesting the point that broader inclusion is a good thing to do; however, we might problematize the relationship between necessity and sufficiency in this context.<sup>53</sup> Whilst the texts present the addition of women as essential, there appears to be silence as to whether the mere addition of women constitutes a sufficient condition for progress.

There is also a tension within the documents in which the discourse first must exclude and categorize women as ‘others’ before asserting the need for women’s inclusion specifically as ‘women’. For example, Canada supports ‘active and meaningful engagement by all states, by civil society, and by women’,<sup>54</sup> and Thailand states that ‘civil society, industry, academia, women, youth, etc.—all stakeholders should be engaged in efforts to enable us to reach a world free of nuclear weapons’.<sup>55</sup> Multiple statements from the EU mention the inclusion of women alongside that of civil society and academia.<sup>56</sup> These statements, and others, place women as external to the institution, and as a homogeneous ‘stakeholder’ group with a specific perspective that should be included. ‘Women’ are also separated from other ‘stakeholders’, even though not only do civil society, academia and young people include women, but women are already within the NPT process acting as diplomats and UN officials, albeit in smaller numbers than men. This leads us to question: who are these women who must be included? First, we need to ask why the women already present in the NPT process aren’t acknowledged; second, we need to question both the reduction of diversity to

<sup>50</sup> Remarks by Ms Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to Third Preparatory Committee Session of the 2020 Review Cycle, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, side-event ‘When participation becomes meaningful: advancing the conversation on gender diversity in the NPT’, 3 May 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Eric M. Blanchard, ‘Gender, international relations and the development of feminist security theory’, *Signs* 28: 4, 2003, pp. 1289–1312.

<sup>52</sup> Ireland, *Impact and empowerment*.

<sup>53</sup> Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown, ‘Gender and security: framing the agenda’, in Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown, eds, *The gender and security agenda: strategies for the 21st century* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020) pp. 1–28.

<sup>54</sup> Canada, statement to the 3rd session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, delivered by Cindy Termorshuizen, New York, 29 April 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Thailand, statement on ‘Cluster 1: Disarmament’ to the 3rd session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, delivered by Ms Maratee Nalita Andamo, 2 May 2019.

<sup>56</sup> EU statement on Cluster I issues to the 3rd session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 29 April–10 May 2019, delivered by Ms Anne Kempainen.

women without acknowledgement of other types of exclusions, and the reduction of the category of 'women' to a group who have all been excluded in the same way and to the same extent.

Delineating women as an 'outsider' category reifies essentialist notions of women and femininity, rendering the differences within and upheld by the category of women and the conflicting expectations on these subjects invisible. The emphasis on women's participation while also discursively constructing them as outsiders maximizes the potential for the 'interpretative coding' of what women are by presenting a blank canvas on which meaning and beliefs can be projected.<sup>57</sup> This leaves scope for the existence of multiple belief-systems pertaining to what women are (and what they are not). Feminists have underlined the extent to which women in international politics have been simultaneously subjugated within and excluded from public life.<sup>58</sup> As such, the categorization of 'women' as a group of outsiders that can bring a 'value-added' to the NPT rests not only on the necessity of their prior discursive exclusion from the institution, but also on erasing difference within the category of 'women'.

The categorization of women as separate from the NPT thereby constitutes a site wherein power is exercised, in a manner that can be considered through postcolonial critiques of the assumed homogeneity of 'women' as a category. A postcolonial critique encourages us to question the assumption of unity stemming from diversity and, significantly, the role played by categorizing and thus 'othering' groups of individuals.<sup>59</sup> Such categorizing and othering result in a confusion between the 'discursively consensual homogeneity of "women" as a group' and 'the historically specific material reality of groups of women'.<sup>60</sup> In other words, when women's oppression within a given system is taken as an indicator of women's 'sameness', this negates consideration of the differences within that group, and thus ignores how power is experienced differently within and across the group. This is particularly salient in the NPT context as we note the almost exclusive emphasis on gender within gender-sensitive approaches without reference to how gender intersects with other sites of power such as race, coloniality and class.

### *Gender as institutional efficiency, women as a resource*

While all texts claimed the importance of gender for non-proliferation and disarmament, there was little mention of connecting gender sensitivity to specific NPT policy issues. Any specific recommendations tend to focus on the question of

<sup>57</sup> Cohn, 'Wars, wimps and women'.

<sup>58</sup> Blanchard, 'Gender, international relations', p. 1292. See also Hooper, *Manly states*, pp. 91–3; V. Spike Peterson, 'Rereading public and private: the dichotomy that is not one', *SAIS Review* 20: 2, 2000, pp. 11–29; Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli and Chad F. Emmett, *Sex and world peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 17–53; J. Ann Tickner, 'Feminism meets International Relations' in Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True, eds, *Feminist methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 22–4.

<sup>59</sup> Chandra Mohanty, 'Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', *Feminist Review* 30: 1, 1988, p. 63; María Lugones, 'Toward a decolonial feminism', *Hypatia* 25: 4, 2010, pp. 742–59; Ien Ang, 'Beyond unity in diversity: cosmopolitanizing identities in a global world', *Diogenes* 60: 1, 2013, pp. 10–20.

<sup>60</sup> Mohanty, 'Under western eyes', p. 65.

women's inclusion rather than on that of a gendered analysis of policy. There were a few exceptions. A 2019 working paper by UNIDIR and others, for example, asserts that any progress on gender must include a 'general appreciation among multilateral practitioners of the ways in which the substantive issues they deal with are often gendered'.<sup>61</sup> A statement by Ireland asserts that gender perspectives must be included 'in the substance of work across all three pillars of the NPT'.<sup>62</sup> Overall, however, there is a lack of specificity as to what including gender means and requires in order to go beyond questions of formalized gender equality.

In many cases, gender sensitivity is linked to institutional efficiency. The most common justification for greater inclusion of women is that it will make the NPT process more effective, although what precisely 'effective' means is unspecified.<sup>63</sup> A statement by the Nordic group, for example, makes the case that

including gender perspectives and pursuing equal gender representation is not only a question of rights and fairness, it is a matter of efficiency ... When looking to break the ongoing stalemate and trenchdigging within disarmament and non-proliferation, improving gender aspects is not 'soft policy'—it is smart policy.<sup>64</sup>

In the 2017 PrepCom Chair's summary, the inclusion of women is mentioned twice: near the start of the document emphasizing the need for full and effective participation of women and men, and again in a section that sets out proposals for improving NPT procedures, including

enhancing the interactivity of discussions; increasing accountability through transparency and reporting; increasing the participation of women in delegations; enabling the Preparatory Committee to take substantive decisions; conducting work on the basis of a rolling text so as to enable progress to be carried forward by each session of the Preparatory Committee; ensuring effective time management; and revisiting the topics considered by subsidiary bodies.<sup>65</sup>

That the 'participation of women' is situated next to 'effective time management' connects with statements by UNODA that the inclusion of women is necessary because 'problems as grave and difficult as nuclear weapons require the mobilization of all our human capital'.<sup>66</sup> This underlines the notion that the inclusion of women can be boiled down to what Hanna Muehlenhoff discusses as a vision of 'women as resources for effective peace'.<sup>67</sup> The understanding of women's participation in the NPT documents as a means by which to streamline

<sup>61</sup> UNIDIR et al., *Integrating gender perspectives*.

<sup>62</sup> Statement by Ireland, 'Cluster III: specific issue', at the 2019 Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Parties to the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), New York, 7 May 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Other justifications include a rights-based justification, as seen in the UNIDIR et al. working paper, which asserts that women's participation 'is also a question of fairness and equality': UNIDIR et al., *Integrating gender perspectives*.

<sup>64</sup> General statement by the Nordic countries to 2nd session of the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 2nd session, Geneva, 23 April–4 May 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Chair's factual summary (working paper), NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.40, 25 May 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Nakamitsu, 'When participation becomes meaningful'.

<sup>67</sup> Muehlenhoff, 'Victims, soldiers, peacemakers', p. 159; see also Sheri Lynn Gibbings, 'No angry women at the United Nations: political dreams and the cultural politics of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13: 4, 2011, pp. 522–38.

the process creates a discourse that constructs women as resources to improve the NPT's efficiency in a similar way to better time management.

Seen from the standpoint of efficiency, the argument for women's inclusion is rooted in an economic calculation, which values the benefit of women's participation as higher than its cost. As such, increasing women's inclusion in the NPT can be understood in terms of the 'neoliberal economization of political and social life' and its 'discursive production of everyone as human capital'.<sup>68</sup> Through this lens, efficiency calculations are individualized, and rest on the 'responsibilization' of the individual as the accountable actor within a system that simultaneously 'radically limits' their ability to act, so that responsibility performs a mode of governing subjects.<sup>69</sup> By rhetorically excluding women as 'other' only then to include them as 'women', and by understanding the purpose of this inclusion as making the NPT more efficient, the discourse creates a specific role for essentialized 'woman' as a human resource. This role implicates women as essential to maximize the efficiency of the NPT process, while the emphasis on participation and empowerment brings with it the shifting of responsibility from the institutional to the individual as human capital.

The 'gender as institutional efficiency' theme in the NPT documents resonates with Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman Rosamond's study of the Swedish development of FFP. They contend that the combination of broad consensus on the norm of pursuing gender mainstreaming across international bodies and the 'technical and expert-led approach' to gender mainstreaming render FFP a 'depoliticised' process.<sup>70</sup> This depoliticization feeds into an uncontested understanding of gender mainstreaming in terms of the gains it can bring to institutional processes and efficiency. From this perspective, gender mainstreaming is pursued because of the instrumental impact it might have on efficiency, as opposed to the overhauling of security policies to better align them with the normative endeavours of feminist peace. As such, the process of gender mainstreaming risks being institutionally overrun by professionals who see gender as an 'interesting statistical variable'.<sup>71</sup> By reading NPT documents through this critique, the importance of women's inclusion as *the* consideration of gender is linked not to outcomes for women or for a feminist politics, but rather to a more efficient system in which women are instruments of human capital. Understanding gender as an enabler of efficiency, rather than a means by which to challenge existing structures, is thus contrary to repeated assertions that including more women will 'upend the status quo'.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Wendy Brown, 'Sacrificial citizenship: neoliberalism, human capital, and austerity politics', *Constellations* 23: 1, 2016, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, 'Sacrificial citizenship', p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Karin Aggestam and Annika Bergman Rosamond, 'Re-politicising the gender–security nexus: Sweden's feminist foreign policy', *European Review of International Studies* 5: 3, 2018, p. 36.

<sup>71</sup> Aggestam and Rosamond, 'Re-politicising the gender–security nexus', p. 36.

<sup>72</sup> Remarks by Ms Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, at 'Women in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty' event, Geneva, 25 April 2018.

## Conclusion

This article has examined how the NPT, as one of the central institutions of nuclear weapons governance, has begun to incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives into its work, and how actors within the NPT have outlined what a gender-sensitive approach means in the context of nuclear weapons. We have argued that the calls for gender sensitivity in the documents under study reveal a great deal about (1) what gender and a gender-sensitive approach mean and require in nuclear policy; (2) the current limits of ‘gendering’ the NPT; and (3) the wider processes and challenges of ‘gendering’ international security spaces. We have shown that ‘gender’ has been almost exclusively equated with women, and that including gender has been understood as including a homogenized category of ‘women’ in nuclear policy-making. We have also argued that this illustrates a mostly implicit but at some points explicit understanding of women as outsiders to the NPT process who need to be included through exclusion; and of the NPT itself as a simultaneously male and non-gendered space. This leads to an approach to gender that, while asserting the potential role of women as change-makers, envisions including gender perspectives to improve the efficiency of the existing practices of the NPT rather than to challenge or better understand how and why gender is already at work in nuclear policy.

Returning to our ‘what’s the problem?’ research framing, our analysis reveals that the problem that gender sensitivity is envisaged as ‘solving’ in the NPT discourse is that of the inefficiency of the NPT. In so doing, gender sensitivity will strengthen the global institutions, rules and norms of nuclear weapons politics. These institutions, rules and norms have been delineated as a ‘global nuclear order’ encompassing related systems of managed deterrence and nuclear restraint.<sup>73</sup> The documents tell the story that including gender will improve this order, pushing us towards the stated eventual aims of this order: nuclear disarmament. This is where Shampa Biswas’ question ‘whose order?’ becomes crucial in examining what the inclusion of gender enables and ignores.<sup>74</sup> We have found that the discourse, for now, does not enable an interrogation of whether the stated goal of nuclear disarmament matches what the nuclear order has historically enabled and what structures of power it continues to uphold. To this extent, meaningfully gendering nuclear weapons policy requires serious consideration of how the nuclear order, as enshrined in the NPT, and calls for gender sensitivity can be reconciled.

We do not make this argument as a denunciation of work to date by dedicated researchers, NGOs and diplomats on gender in nuclear policy forums and processes, but as indicating a moment to pause and consider what has been done so far and to ask what the next steps can be. What is the purpose of gendering this space? The inclusion of gender in nuclear weapons politics has lagged far behind other areas of security, and the work that has been done to date is still in its initial

<sup>73</sup> William Walker, *A perpetual menace: nuclear weapons and international order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Biswas, *Nuclear desire*.

stages. Our aim is to reflect on actions to date from our feminist perspective and to suggest some next steps based on this analysis.

First, we conclude that those working on this issue need to consider the extent to which the inclusion of gender perspectives is being developed within the context of WPS obligations. While there are advantages to using WPS as a means to encourage consideration of gender perspectives, framing the question of gender and nuclear weapons through WPS further encourages the focus on women's participation as *the* issue of gender. This leads us to suggest that policy-makers should engage with other avenues beyond WPS. In fact, there are already resources that directly speak to the questions of nuclear weapons and gender that have fallen out of the debate as it has been institutionalized. For example, a 2001 UNODA briefing note on 'Gender perspectives and weapons of mass destruction' makes several recommendations. As well as suggesting the development of individual women's expertise, these include 'establishing better contact with women researchers and those working on the gender dimensions of nuclear weapons'.<sup>75</sup> This language focuses on developing contacts with specific researchers and NGOs who consider gender beyond inclusion. The briefing note also suggests 'researching the links between masculinity, violent conflict, weapons and nuclear proliferation', an issue that we have shown is missing from the NPT discourse. This could provide a gender-sensitive approach that includes the implications of the ways in which gender is already embedded in multiple hierarchical structures that reproduce the capacities of states to make (nuclear) war.<sup>76</sup>

Second, the focus on 'adding women' to the NPT process does not acknowledge the diverse experiences of and existing limits on women already within the nuclear weapons policy community. We encourage policy-makers to consider how the current landscape works to limit the ability of individuals to participate meaningfully in nuclear politics. Both the discursive challenges alluded to by Cohn and reflected in the 'consensual straitjacket',<sup>77</sup> and the current nuclear order and state commitments within it, can limit what 'meaningful inclusion' can feasibly mean and require. This links to our point about 'responsibilization' as a form of disciplining.<sup>78</sup> The current homogenizing of 'women' and the understanding of such 'women's' inclusion as gender work overlooks the diverse experiences of individuals in the nuclear policy community, in terms of gender as a spectrum and its intersections with race, class, sexuality and disability. It also relies on hegemonic ideas of femininity and masculinity, without questioning whether these versions of gender identity reflect the multiple versions of femininity and masculinity that combine to underpin an individual's experience in this institutional space. We encourage policy-makers to engage in a critical reflection on how

<sup>75</sup> UNODA, 'Gender perspectives and weapons of mass destruction', Briefing Note 1, 2001, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/gender-perspectives/>.

<sup>76</sup> Jacqui True, 'Bringing back gendered states: feminist second image theorizing of international states', in S. Parashar, J. A. Tickner and J. True, eds, *Revisiting gendered states: feminist imaginings of the state in international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 36.

<sup>77</sup> Cohn, 'Wars, wimps and women', p. 239; Hurlburt et al., 'The "consensual straitjacket"'.  
<sup>78</sup> Brown, 'Sacrificial citizenship', p. 10.

gender intersects with other sites of power and, in doing so, to consider what meaningful inclusion could look like from this vantage point.

The conclusions of our examination of the NPT reveal dynamics that are significant not just for the inclusion of gender-sensitive approaches in the NPT but also for wider debates and practices of 'gendering' what are traditionally considered to be non-gendered security spaces and issues. We have found that, to a large extent, the discourse on gender and the NPT could be interchanged with any set of documents on gender and security policy in its focus on how inclusion and equality improve policy-making processes. As more institutional actors and states are turning towards gender-sensitive approaches in the nuclear policy space, our study shows the complexity and often fraught nature of the relationship between gender sensitivity and the institutions and extant structures within which it is invoked and implemented. The findings of this analysis point to the key tensions and challenges for those doing gender in international security spaces and the potential for 'gendering' to become a generic managerial process of maximizing institutional efficiency. The process of 'gendering' security spaces thereby risks becoming a tool used by actors and institutions to maintain the status quo. As such, the institutionalization of gender may not only limit the potential for gender-sensitive approaches to achieve their stated aims, but may also do tacit political work for states stalling on their commitments elsewhere. For security policy, this suggests that gender work should be scrutinized to understand what role 'gendering' does in providing political capital to states, and to consider how present approaches prefigure and limit the potential for future gender work.

Finally, a crucial point that is generally lacking from the NPT discourse concerns the specifics of what *nuclear weapons* mean for gender and security. What does it mean that we are considering gender specifically in relation to weapons that can kill millions of people and change life on Earth; weapons whose radioactive legacy affects places and lives for generations? This point has been for the most part lost in debates about increased efficiency and improved process. We suggest that the next steps in 'gendering' nuclear policy should devote further resources towards work that engages seriously with what considering nuclear weapons through a gender lens means and requires.