BETWEEN NORMS AND PRACTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU'S IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

BETWEEN NORMS AND PRACTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU'S IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

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This thesis examines the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the European Union's (EU) external action through the lens of feminist security studies. Grounded in Critical Security Studies (CSS) that expand the concept of security beyond military threats, the thesis analyses how the EU integrates the WPS agenda through institutional strategies, policy frameworks, and implementation mechanisms. The research evaluates the EU's performance as a normative global power in advancing WPS goals, using both policy effectiveness and feminist critique as analytical tools. The findings reveal a gap between rhetoric and practice, demonstrating that despite its ambitious frameworks, the EU often adopts an instrumentalist approach to gender equality. The variability in Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) and the persistence of gender-blind institutional logics hinder transformative change. From a feminist perspective, the thesis argues that meaningful implementation of the WPS agenda requires not only transformation of existing gender dynamics but also a rethinking of institutional structure to address inequalities. Overall, the thesis highlights the need for a deeper institutional transformation and feminist vision in the EU's approach to WPS.

Keywords: Women, Peace and Security (WPS), European Union (EU), feminist security studies, peacebuilding, gender equality

ÖZ

NORMLAR VE UYGULAMA ARASINDA: AB'NİN KADIN, BARIŞ VE GÜVENLİK GÜNDEMİNİ UYGULAMASINA İLİŞKİN BİR ANALİZ

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Bu tez, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik (WPS) gündeminin Avrupa Birliği (AB) dış ilişkilerinde uygulanmasını feminist güvenlik çalışmaları perspektifinden incelemektedir. Güvenlik kavramını yalnızca askeri tehditlerle sınırlamayan eleştirel güvenlik çalışmaları temelinde şekillenen bu tezde, AB'nin WPS gündemine yaklaşımı, kurumsal belgeler, politika planları ve uygulama mekanizmaları üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. AB'nin normatif bir küresel aktör olarak WPS hedeflerine ulaşmadaki performansı, hem politika etkinliği hem de feminist perspektif çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma, AB'nin kapsayıcı söylemlerine rağmen uygulamada tutarsızlıklar barındırdığını, AB politikalarının ülkeler arası farklılıklar nedeniyle etkisizleşebildiğini ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini araçsallaştıran bir yaklaşıma sıkıştığını ortaya koymaktadır. Ülke Düzeyinde Uygulama Planlarındaki değişkenlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet körü kurumsal mantığın devamlılığı, dönüşümü engellemektedir. Feminist perspektif çerçevesinde, mevcut kurumların dönüşüm potansiyeli sorgulanmış, yapısal eşitsizliklerin giderilmesi için radikal kurumsal yeniden tasarımlara ihtiyaç duyulduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu bağlamda tez,

AB’nin WPS gündeminin asıl amacına ulaşması için daha derinlikli bir kurumsal dönüşüm ve feminist yaklaşıma duyulan ihtiyacını vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik (WPS), Avrupa Birliği (AB), feminist güvenlik çalışmaları, barış inşası, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği

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LIST OF ABBREVATIONS

AU	African Union
BPFA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CLIPs	Country-Level Implementation Plans
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CSS	Critical Security Studies
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMEP	European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme
ESDC	European Security and Defense College
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
EU	European Union
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy
FSS	Feminist Security Studies
GAPs	Gender Action Plans
GCP	Gender Country Profile
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
IR	International Relations

ISS	International Security Studies
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MS	Member States
NAPs	National Action Plans
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGOWG	Non-Governmental Organization Working Group
P5	Permanent Members
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
VAW	Violence against women
WEDO	Women's Environment & Development Organization
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHRD	Women's Human Rights Defenders
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, initiated with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, has grown to be a key component of international initiatives to integrate gender considerations into peace and security processes. According to the WPS agenda, women must be included in decision-making at all levels, women and girls must be protected from gender-based violence in conflict settings, and gender perspectives must be incorporated into all phases of conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. The European Union (EU) has established itself as a powerful normative actor dedicated to promoting gender equality during the last 20 years through its internal institutions and external actions. Emphasizing the EU's norm-taker role, thesis examines the EU's implementation of the WPS agenda, assessing its effectiveness from a feminist and policy perspective.

There are still many concerns about the breadth and consistency of the EU's WPS implementation, despite its stated commitment to gender equality. Institutional attempts to integrate gender into EU foreign and security policy are demonstrated by the adoption of strategic frameworks, such the Comprehensive Approach to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (2008), the Strategic Approach to WPS (2018), and subsequent Gender Action Plans (GAPs). Nonetheless, scholars continue to criticize the disconnect between discourse and practice. Collective action is hampered by varied national agendas and inadequate accountability systems, even though some member nations have supported feminist foreign policy. Furthermore, civil society actors and feminist scholars have increasingly questioned whether the EU's approach to WPS reflects a transformative commitment to gender equality or a strategic instrumentalization of gender to advance pre-existing policy goals.

This thesis seeks to explore the EU's implementation of the WPS agenda through a critical lens. Being one of the strongest norm-taker in the field of gender equality and peacebuilding, evaluation of the EU's approach could lead to better implementation of United Nations (UN) Resolutions in multi-state settings. It is guided by the following research questions: How is the EU implementing the WPS agenda? What is the role of the EU's soft power in promoting UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's implementation of the WPS agenda from both a policy effectiveness and a feminist perspective? And how do institutional structures and political dynamics shape the consistency and transformative potential of the EU's approach?

To answer these questions, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents a theoretical framework based on Critical Security Studies (CSS) and feminist approaches to International Relations. The second chapter situates the WPS agenda in feminist and institutional debates, outlining its normative roots and challenges. The third chapter looks at the EU's specific implementation initiatives, which include institutional mechanisms, gender mainstreaming tools, and external action measures. The fourth and final chapter provides a critical review of the EU's WPS implementation, emphasizing its strengths and weaknesses through a policy effectiveness and feminist lenses, before concluding with thoughts on the agenda's future within the EU's global role. This thesis adds to the expanding body of scholarship examining the transforming possibilities of gender mainstreaming in global governance by combining institutional analysis with feminist critique. It contends that, while the EU has made substantial progress in institutionalizing the WPS agenda, significant structural and political impediments persist, limiting its influence and undermining its claimed normative goals.

1.1. Methodology

This thesis adopts a qualitative research design rooted in constructivist and feminist epistemologies. Unlike positivist approaches, which assume objectivity and neutrality, constructivist and feminist security studies emphasize that security is socially constructed and deeply gendered. Accordingly, the study focuses on

discourse, policy frameworks, and institutional practices rather than quantitative indicators, with the aim of understanding how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is framed, implemented, and contested within the European Union (EU). The analysis draws on a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official EU reports and UNSCR documents while secondary sources complement this foundation by offering critical perspectives and scholarly debates. These include academic texts, reports by think tanks and civil society organizations and feminist analyses that interrogate the EU's normative claims and practical outcomes.

Discourse analysis and content analysis are combined in this study. The framework for examining how women are portrayed – as victims, peacemakers, or political actors – and how these portrayals impact the WPS agenda's capacity for change is provided by feminist security studies (Cohn et al., 2004; Gibbings, 2011). The level of accountability mechanisms in place, the translation of commitments into quantifiable outcomes, and the coherence between rhetoric and practice are all examined in order to determine how effective a policy is (Allwood, 2018; Desmidt, 2021). Combining these two perspectives, the thesis assesses the EU's normative goals as well as the institutional limitations that prevent them from being realized.

On the other hand, this research recognizes its limitations. First, many EU documents are technical and descriptive rather than analytical, which makes it challenging to measure their transformative impact. Triangulation with diverse academic research and civil society reports is therefore required. Second, the diversity of the EU's member states is reflected in its external actions. The EU's capacity to function as a single normative authority is constrained by this contradiction.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & ACADEMIC EVOLUTION

2.1. On The Way to Critical Security Studies (CSS)

States undoubtedly play a crucial role in international politics, but should they remain at the center of international security? Are states the ultimate provider of security, and if so, security for whom? How significant are human agency or society in shaping the pursuit of security? Is security pregiven or constructed? What is security? All these answers diverge depending on who is asked. The concept of security has always been pivotal in International Relations (IR). As IR literature expanded and varied, so did International Security Studies (ISS) literature. Although "security" inconvertibly is provided by and for the state according to a Realist, the answers are not so unconditioned.

Considering ISS as a result of the hegemony of Realist IR understanding, the survival of states was the essential indicator for the pursuit of security. Through the lens of Realists, security is mostly seen as state sovereignty and surviving in an anarchic international system. They prioritize national interests, security of state against outside threats, depending heavily on military capabilities and the balance of power. This state-centric and materialist approach view conflict as inevitable and frequently emphasizes zero-sum competition above collaboration while generally ignoring non-state actors and human security issues. On the other hand, Critical Security Studies (CSS) is mostly associated with thinking beyond states and broadening the number of referent objects (See Chapter 2.3.) of security (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 11).

The history of security studies demonstrates how evolving international events drive the academic agenda on security studies (Walt, 1991, p. 228). The scope of ISS

broadened near the end of the Cold War and accelerated thereafter. Defining the ISS discipline purely by "the use of force" became excessively narrow. Cold War definitions of security largely limited how security was conceptualized and practiced by a militarized focus, prioritizing state security and national sovereignty over other referent objects. "Security was equated with military security" (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 38), emphasizing concepts such as realpolitik, nuclear deterrence, and the security dilemma. Governments invested massive resources into arms accumulation and defense, putting military strength over anything else (Booth, 2005, p. 72). In the meantime, individual security, according to this approach, is the duty of the state, and "the security of individuals was subsumed under the ambit of the state and frequently sacrificed to the imperatives of realpolitik" (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 38).

The concepts of superpower and bipolarity, which characterized the competition between the US and the USSR as the two leading nuclear powers, were highly compatible with this militaristic perspective and the dynamics of the Cold War. The debate of whether nuclear weapons or bipolarity better characterized the foundations of this era was crucial for the evolution of Strategic Studies and IR (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 68; Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 38). ISS progressively differentiated itself from IR by focusing "either on assumptions or on debates around and about the concept of international security" (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 17). However, Walt who is best known for his contributions to the realist school of IR, cautions although an overemphasis on urgent policy concerns serves as the primary source of fresh research subjects and prevents academic irrelevance, it can hamper long-term development and raise the risk that research funding to be susceptible to international instability (Walt, 1991, p. 228).

This dynamic became particularly explicit during the Cold War, when military issues were given priority over economic and environmental issues beyond borders and state security was frequently given precedence above personal welfare because of an excessive focus on urgent threats. The search for security by means of force has prompted a global arms race, leading to proxy wars, authoritarian governments, and oppression. This has caused human hardship, loss of life, and hampered social

and economic growth. The unrestrained spread of nuclear and conventional weapons also endangers the planet's ecosystem, with nuclear war and pollution from arms testing posing serious challenges to global ecological security. Ironically, this had led to first concrete cooperation of Eastern and Western blocs since the 1975 Helsinki Accords. An initiative, named the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP), was established in 1977 to monitor air pollution in the common airspace over the European continent, during the détente era (R. Rothschild, 2016, p. 832).

This militarized approach to security occasionally led to actions that negatively impacted civilian populations even if they were intended to counter identified external threats. The striking example is the Berlin Wall that was constructed in 1961 with the goal of keeping East Germans from escaping to the West. It was built to preserve the stability of the Eastern Bloc, officially functioning as “the Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart” (antifaschistischen Schutzwall) (30 Jahre Mauerfall, n.d.). However, this action demonstrated how such security measures may have a detrimental influence on human lives by drastically restricting the freedom of travel for countless individuals and dividing families for decades. During this 28-year period, the Berlin Wall strongly demonstrated how security practices may violate human rights. It became an unforgettable symbol of how a state’s demand for security and authority resulted in profound personal and community tragedies.

Economic and environmental concerns were only briefly brought to light. During the détente era, leaders recognized that not all dangers came from armies or missiles and brought a broader range of economic and environmental concerns to the international agenda. For example, the 1973 oil crisis, in which Middle Eastern oil producers reduced shipments, caused shockwaves throughout Western economy. The consequent energy shortages and increasing oil prices demonstrated how vulnerable countries were to economic disruptions. This wake-up call elevated the concept of “energy security” and compelled policymakers to view economic stability and resource access as critical components of national security. Similarly, growing global environmental consciousness emerged in the 1970s. The United States, the Soviet Union, and European countries began working together on issues such as air

pollution management and acid rain (for instance, EMEP known as the "European-wide monitoring programme"). According to historian Rachel Rothschild, scientific collaborations on environmental issues across the Iron Curtain aided in the promotion of détente by fostering trust in common concerns (R. Rothschild, 2016). This shift, however, was short-lived until the military-centered security focus reappeared and tensions resurfaced in the late 1970s (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 38).

2.2. Emergence of Critical Security Studies (CSS)

The mainstream state-centered understanding of security has shifted with the advent of Critical Security Studies (CSS) (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 38). As a result of two significant events – the end of the Cold War and the fourth great debate between positivist and post-positivist theories of IR – the limits of security started to be reinvestigated (Rothschild, 1995, p. 59). To observe fundamental historical and structural shifts also provided a unique opportunity to recreate the long-awaited tabula rasa and to start a new canvas for creating a new global order (Walker, 1997, p. 64). Traditional state-centric approach remains restricted with "constant threat of war" and self-help system in anarchical area while CSS allowed scholars to think about security in a broader sense.

2.2.1. Broadening and Deepening

The Cartesian logic, developed by French philosopher René Descartes, refers to a rationalist framework which emphasizes dualist thinking, objective reasoning, and the separation of subject and object (See chapter 2.2.2.). Rejecting this dualism, CSS argues that separating the subject from the object ignores how knowledge is socially constructed and how power, identity, and context shape what is considered "security". Therefore, CSS recognized that security is a derivative concept (Booth, 1991; Walker, 1997). This perspectives suggests that conceptions of security derive from individual's worldview, historical memory and political stance rather than an implicit understanding rooted in the Realist paradigm of a power struggle among sovereign states in an anarchical international system (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000,

p. 41). Threats become "objective" only when political actors acknowledge them as such, not because they are inherently dangerous or threatening; thus, security is fundamentally "a self-referential practice" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24). By acknowledging the derivative nature of security, CSS aims to develop alternative conceptions of security by broadening and deepening the meaning of security.

Barry Buzan's book *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (1983) helped lay the groundwork for the Copenhagen School of political theory. The Copenhagen School paved the way for a paradigm change in security studies by focusing on non-military aspects of security and broadening the scope beyond established frameworks which define security in terms of state survival and military threats, meaning that the protection of borders, sovereignty, and military capability. Non-military aspects, on the other hand, refer to topics that are often invisible in traditional security paradigms, such as structural inequality, gendered violence, poverty, or political marginalization. This shift away from a military perspective allows us to see insecurity as a result of diverse non-military aspects. According to Buzan, analysts overlooked other factors that were as important as military dimension in understanding how both policymakers and public perceive their security interests. To address this gap, Buzan proposed broadening the concept of security, which is one of the core intention of CSS (Buzan, 1983). Buzan argued that the concept of security encompass not only the military but also four other "sectors", namely political, economic, societal and environmental sectors (Stamnes & Wyn Jones, 2000, p. 40).

In addition to broadening, CSS advocates to alternate the "referent objects" other than the state. Scholars and social movement practitioners have offered many alternative referent objects for security. Ken Booth argued in *Security and Emancipation* (1991) that "states are unreliable as primary referents" (Booth, 1991, p. 320) and inadequate for a complete security theory. Additionally, states considered as the provider of security both internally and externally "represent the means and not the end" (Booth, 1991, p .320) . He further argued that individuals should be the ultimate referent objects through emancipation. Emancipation involves liberating people and groups from certain restraints that restrict their ability to make

independent choices. For Booth, emancipation leads to actual security – the absence of threats – as security and emancipation are intertwined (Booth, 1991, p. 319). With this viewpoint, security may be hampered by limitations also such as political repression, poverty, lack of education and war.

Wyn Jones (1999) argues that depending on a particular problem and domain, several referent objects emerge in security discourse. National identity or civil society may be relevant in some cases, while in others, smaller community or groups (giving the example of violence against women) may be more suitable as referent objects (Wyn Jones, 1999, p. 91). In this sense, focusing on the experiences of underprivileged people and groups in the existing world system will allow emphasize insecurity created by environmental, nutrition, and economic problems. In this direction, security is distinct from order and authority, and it now includes humans, leading those formerly excluded from conventional security understanding to become its concern (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006, p. 456).

CSS criticizes states for frequently fostering insecurity rather than promoting stability and prosperity (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, pp. 205-206). To broaden the definition of security, security analysts must abandon the conventional state-centric viewpoint and adopt one that emphasizes reality of individuals. By doing so, security analysis may better reflect the complex, multifaceted character of security that encompasses social well-being, economic stability, and human rights based on the lived experiences of individuals in territories. Developing lasting peace and security frameworks that consider the needs and vulnerabilities of every member of society, especially those who have traditionally been left out of traditional security discussions, requires this deeper knowledge.

2.2.2. The Object / Subject Divide

It is critical to recognize the variety of factors that impact academic perspectives, stressing that in addition to significant books or historical events; individual experiences, material factors, and life's unforeseen occurrences all play a significant part in forming ideas (Booth, 1997, p.98). The fundamental principles of CSS, which

essentially reject the positivist premise of an object/subject divide at understanding security, are consistent with this stance. Rejecting the object/subject divide refers to rejecting that knowledge is produced through detached, objective observation, where the observer is separate from what is being studied.

The natural and social sciences, according to positivists, can preserve a distinct division between the researcher (subject) and the phenomenon under study (object). CSS, on the other hand, argues that as security is inevitably influenced by historical, cultural, and political circumstances, such a divide is not only impractical but also reductive when examining security. The process of defining security is seen by CSS as subjective and entwined with human activity, power relations, and worldviews. It emphasizes that the process of producing knowledge is a component of the social and political realities that it aims to comprehend. According to CSS scholars, security theory and practice are closely intertwined, and every security study has potential policy and political ramifications (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006, p. 473). This approach suggests a more relational, contextual, and reflective view of security, which runs counter to positivist assertions of neutrality.

2.3. Referent Objects

CSS asks, “Security for whom?” and “Security from what?” to make security much broader than just the military. A greater variety of topics are now included on the agenda, such as poverty, resource scarcity, climate change, and human rights abuses, in addition to the more conventional worries about war and conflict. It is no longer considered that the nation-state is the sole entity that must be safeguarded in CSS; scholars refer to this as the referent object of security. People, groups, or even humanity as a whole may be affected, demonstrating a more profound and human-centered interpretation of what “security” entails.

A number of schools of thought within CSS have emerged in recent decades, all of which are dedicated to expanding the referent objects of security outside the state. Securitization theory, which was first presented by the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever, and others), looks at how problems are framed in speech as immediate

security risks. Securitization theory "widened the scope of security to include other referent objects beyond the state," defining a referent object as "the thing that is threatened and needs to be protected" (Eroukhmanoff, 2018). It distinguishes between many security domains, each with its own referent object: military, political, social, economic, and environmental. The state is still the principal target to be protected solely in the conventional military sector; in the sociological sector, for instance, the referent object is collective identity, whilst in the environmental sector, it is the ecosystem. (Eroukhmanoff, 2018)

The focus is shifted to the individual human person as the referent object in another strand, the Aberystwyth (Welsh) School, which is linked with Ken Booth. This method contends that emancipation of individuals from systemic violence and threats—is the path toward true security. Booth famously wrote that "Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin… Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security" (Booth, 1991, p. 319), underlining that protecting human beings (not just states) is the ultimate purpose of security.

Instead of viewing states as solely security actors, the Paris School, a third significant school, examines the routine actions and power dynamics that result in security policy. All of these critical perspectives agree on broadening the scope of what or who is deemed the topic of security, regardless of their differing focuses, whether it is on sociopolitical practice (Paris), human emancipation (Welsh), or speech actions and identity (Copenhagen). Security in CSS is no longer state-centric; it includes a variety of referent objects and acknowledges that dangers can come from a variety of sources, not only militaries or geopolitics, such as the economic, social, and environmental spheres.

CSS is grounded in post-positivist and constructivist philosophy. Security is a social and political construct, according to CSS researchers, rather than an objective state "out there". The way issues are presented and whose viewpoint is adopted determine what constitutes a "security threat"; in other words, dangers are intersubjective and are defined by language and shared views rather than just objective material facts. In security research, critical methods thus contradict positivist presumptions of

impartial, value-free information. They contend that knowledge regarding security is constantly influenced by social values and power dynamics and that there is no objective, empirically "given" security truths that are not context dependent.

Thus, CSS researchers are self-reflexive about the role of power in defining security and prefer interpretative approaches. Theory is viewed not only as a means of characterizing the world, but also as a component of reality, assisting in the construction of our conception of what or who should be protected (Clausen, 2022). Most importantly, CSS focused on transformation. Critical scholars aim to change security practices to better safeguard individuals by challenging prevailing narratives. They point out that the conventional idea of security, which is centered on the state and military, is a distorted construct that must be contested. CSS suggests that redefining security in this way might create opportunities for more equitable and sustainable forms of safety. In its place, CSS advocates a vision of security focused on human emancipation and global well-being.

2.4. The Concept of Security with a Feminist Lens: Feminist Security Studies (FSS)

Women have long been systematically excluded from political realms, decision-making processes, and peacebuilding initiatives, with cultural norms relegating them to domestic tasks. This marginalization is reflected in their underrepresentation of leadership roles as well as in official peace negotiations. In addition to undermining gender equality, this structural exclusion also makes it more difficult to create inclusive and long-lasting peace solutions. Between 1992 and 2019, women globally made up just 6% of mediators, 6% of signings, and 13% of negotiators (Women's Participation in Peace Processes, n.d.). According to new global data analysis by UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor, in 2023, women accounted for just 9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements, indicating minimal progress over the years. (Facts and Figures, n.d.) The persistent difficulties in attaining gender parties in peace processes across the world are shown by these statistics. According to researches, peace agreements including female signatories are more likely to be implemented and

thrive longer (Bell, 2015; Facts and Figures, n.d.). Participation of women in the peace-making processes raises the possibility of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20% and the possibility of a peace agreement lasting 15 years by 35%. (UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015, p. 41) Despite evidence that women's participation increases the longevity of peace agreements, women's underrepresentation in the security domain still exists.

By pointing out gender, feminist analysts draw attention to the ways that traditional paradigms frequently neglect the experiences of women and other marginalized groups. Driven by the same motivation as CSS, Feminist Security Studies (FSS) broadens the scope of the referent objects beyond the state to include people, communities, and social groups, particularly those who are at risk due to patriarchal or hierarchical systems. In this way, FSS is a component of the larger Critical Security Studies literature, which questions the state-centric, realist presumptions of conventional security. According to J. Ann Tickner, majority of IR feminists are more aligned with what is known as "critical security studies" in IR than they are with more traditional IR security scholarship (Tickner, 2004a, p. 43). Therefore, feminist researchers employ critical and post-positivist methodologies to investigate not just how to secure, but also what and who is being secured.

A post-positivist and emancipatory stance, denying that security can be identified as an objective and value-free, is shared by feminist and other critical approaches. Rather, they view security as intrinsically political and socially constructed. As Gasztold argues, FSS "like other post-positivist concepts, assumes the crossing of boundaries and thus a critique of positivist achievements" (Gasztold, 2017, p. 180). From an ontological standpoint, FSS takes a different worldview than realism. Conventional IR frequently assumes an anarchic world with unitary, rational states. Contrarily, feminists begin with an ontology of social ties, holding that gendered power dynamics ingrained at all societal levels provide security (Tickner, 2004a, p. 44). In this sense, feminist researchers are overtly dedicated to providing knowledge based on the lived experiences of women and vulnerable groups, with justice and equality.

2.4.1. Rising of the Feminist Security Studies

FSS emerged only in the middle of the 2000s as an in-depth critique of traditional IR and security studies, which have historically promoted state-centric, military approaches. It is still developing and becoming recognized as a separate academic discipline (Urrutia Arestizábal et al., 2020). Early feminist scholarship, such as Ann Tickner's *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (Tickner, 1992) and Reardon's *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security* (Reardon, 1993), questioned the primacy of national security and advocated for a broader definition of security including the gender identities and dynamics. In addition to the absence of war, feminist scholars redefined security by counting economic and environmental insecurities in as well as aiming for "positive peace" based on social and economic justice (Wibben, 2011, p. 4).

The main goal of this approach is to investigate how gender identities and dynamics impact experiences and perceptions of security as well as insecurity (Urrutia Arestizábal et al., 2020). By considering women's everyday experiences and systemic injustices, feminist approach to security broadened referent objects, the definition of security and insecurities in line with feminist objective (Tickner, 1992). While there are differing opinions about what security is, Tickner reviews feminists' attempts to reinterpret national security and claims that "security meant nothing if it was built on other's insecurity" (Tickner, 1992, p. 55). Additionally, Tickner emphasizes the importance of investigating power dynamics and how it produces gendered hierarchies (Wibben, 2011, p. 4).

FSS have been especially concerned with what happens during wartime, particularly the impact of conflict on women and civilians in general. In the meantime, feminists have debunked the idea that wars are conducted to defend women, children, and other groups stereotyped as "vulnerable" (Tickner, 2004b). Framing women as naturally weak and in need of protection reinforces negative misconceptions that support their position as weapons of war, fueling pre-existing gender dynamics to women's detriment. The necessity of reevaluating and challenging conventional security paradigms that ignore or distort the experiences of women and other disadvantaged groups in crisis settings should be highlighted.

By using case studies of diplomatic wives, sex workers, and other disadvantaged groups to examine the linkages of militarism, masculinities, and women's lives, a feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe brought the feminist slogan "the personal is political" (Enloe, 1990, p. 195) to the global stage. It highlights the power dynamics involved in portraying women as absent. In order to understand the power dynamics that make women invisible in traditional security, Enloe's idea of "feminist curiosity" (Enloe, 2004) encouraged scholars to pay attention to women's experiences. According to Enloe, a "feminist curiosity" involves seriously listening to, delving deep in, and establishing a long attention span to all women's lives. In Enloe's words, feminist curiosity is "a curiosity that provokes serious questioning about the workings of masculinized and feminized meanings" (Enloe, 2004, p. 220).

2.4.2. Gender Roles in International Politics

Feminists have emphasized the relationship between the materiality of bodies and the societal character of representational practices as a significant concern in the fight against gender inequality and women's underrepresentation. This realization gave rise to distinguishment between the biological definition of sex and the sociocultural concept of gender. Feminists point out that socially taught gender roles, such as masculine gender identity, drive gendered discourses in international security. According to mainstream IR theories, generic human beings appear to be masculine and consequently man shaped, rather than woman. These masculinities serve as the foundation for aggressiveness, defense, competitive self-interest, and strategic engagement, creating a male-centric international arena (Carver, 2014, p. 120). By rejecting the inherent logic of militarism, feminists claim that rape as a weapon of war is the outcome of gender identities, rather than a natural consequence of a conflict (Wilcox, 2011, p. 596).

2.4.3. The War and Peace Dichotomy

By emphasizing the gendered character of violence and security, FSS challenge the war/peace dichotomy of traditional IR approaches. Feminist academics such as Enloe, Roberts, Sjoberg, and Gentry contribute to the discussions on an

oversimplified war/peace dichotomy through highlighting examples of daily violence, “gendered disciplinary blindnesses” (Shepherd, 2009, p. 209) embedded in conventional approaches, and the significance of human beings in international politics. A “gendered, misleading and potentially pathological” (Shepherd, 2009, p. 208) war/peace dichotomy which is conventionally described in binary terms encourages violence. This duality fails to take into consideration the inherent violence against women in times of peace as well as “the politics of everyday violence” (Shepherd, 2009, p. 209). In addition to that, wartime rape has become institutionalized as a weapon and a kind of amusement which seriously threatens women’s security. Claiming wartime rape as a collective security concern, rather than carelessness behavior, encourages feminist scholars to bring the widespread problem of wartime rape onto the Security Studies agenda (Sjoberg, 2009, p. 198). In short, FSS provides an alternative viewpoint on international politics by emphasizing the importance of the human subject, gender configurations, and the gendered framework of IR.

2.4.4. Gender Insecurities

The risks and vulnerabilities that people encounter because of their gender identification are referred to as gendered insecurities. Gender-based insecurities can take many different forms in the context of security studies, including political, economic, health, and physical concerns (Donovan, 2024; Sjoberg, 2016). For instance, women and girls may experience pandemics, conflicts and wars differently than males do, which might result in further gender inequality and more suffering. In conflict settings, where weak institutions, weak health sectors and population movements create conditions that make people more vulnerable, gender insecurity is frequently made worse. As a recent example, COVID-19 pandemic deepened pre-existing gender inequality, amplifying more of vulnerable settings for women and girls.

In conclusion, women’s experiences in the international arena are frequently overlooked, with gender dynamics ignored in power structure analysis, leaving a substantial void fort feminist scholarship. While CSS scholars broaden the definition

of security and deepen the level of analysis, their research is grounded on society and the individual, not specifically on women's experiences. In fact, non-feminist CSS scholars differ significantly from FSS scholars, as they often fail to include gender as a fundamental component in the analysis of power dynamics. As a result, different security research objectives, strategies, ramifications, and policy recommendations arose. By emphasizing personal narratives and recognizing the performative character of gender/sex, feminist security academics may combat the preponderance of bodiless data in security studies with their own methodological choices (Wibben, 2011, p. 592).

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

As a weapon of war used by soldiers, women and girls have long been the targets of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Meger, 2016, p. 155). While men are generally given responsible to fight for the interests of their community, nation or country, women have been actively involved in defending their homes and children, frequently being left to handle domestic duties. Therefore, women and girls are affected by war and conflicts differently than their male peers in many countries. In fact, as the form of war has evolved from interstate conflicts to violent armed insurgencies and extremist groups in recent decades, the repercussions on women have become more diverse.

Warfare has evolved significantly, moving away from classic interstate armed conflicts and toward more complicated forms such as entrenched civil wars, organized crime, urban violence, and violent extremism. Not only that, new technologies and innovations created new difficulties, such as cyber warfare, information wars and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, complicating the concept of security. Putting all this aside, climate change and other environmental concerns not only threaten all humanity but also create new sectors of insecurities such as weather extremes and hazards, energy crisis, food and water insecurity, health risks, economic disruption, displacement, and even violent conflict. Notably, women and girls are disproportionately impacted and their vulnerabilities exacerbated by these changing forms of conflicts (Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security, 2023). Additionally, the breakdown of social structures during prolonged conflicts exacerbates vulnerabilities, leading to higher rates of displacement and loss of livelihoods among women.

Empirical research suggests a strong correlation between conflict, violence against women, and institutional gender inequity. Patriarchal relationships, customs, and traditional gender identities are emphasized as sources of conflict (Herbert, 2014, pp. 3-7). Supported by a number of quantitative investigation, there is a strong correlation between levels of structural/institutional GBV – gender inequality in short – and conflict (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001; Forsberg & Olsson, 2021; Melander, 2005). A state is more likely to experience internal conflicts as gender inequality rises (Caprioli, 2005, p. 172). People are engaging in acts of hostility and violence in societies where violence against women (VAW) is tolerated. Therefore, regimes that fail to enforce strict sanctions on VAW are encouraging men to commit antisocial actions on a regular basis. This clearly implies a connection between violence at various levels of analysis (Hudson et al., 2009, p. 25). In communities where VAW and gender inequality remain as the "normal" norm, the likelihood of violence increases on a much greater scale, including intra-societal and interstate conflicts (Hudson et al., 2009, p. 26).

Given this background, and based on these findings, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda was developed to safeguard women's inclusion in peace processes and to promote gender equality in war and conflict settings. It resulted from a series of UN Security Council Resolutions and Member State commitments. The emergence Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda has been crucial in tackling the variety of challenges that women encounter during and after conflicts. This chapter explores the development of the WPS agenda, following its inception from key documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to the ratification of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and its follow-up resolutions. By looking at these developments, this chapter aims to clarify how national and international policies have come to acknowledge and work to lessen the specific implications of war on women and girls while encouraging their active involvement in peace processes.

UNSCR 1325 was initiated by transnational feminist networks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Grassroots of UNSCR 1325 are frequently attributed to a global advocacy effort organized by women's civil society

organizations. In May 2000, various women's rights and peace organizations in New York formed the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security (NGOWG). This coalition, initiated by leaders such as Cora Weiss of the Hague Appeal for Peace, brought together 14 NGOs (including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, International Alert, Women's Refugee Commission, Women's Action for New Directions, Femmes Africa Solidarité, WEDO, and others) with the explicit advocacy of equal and full participation of women in all peacebuilding activities. Notably, as part of their lobbying, NGOs wrote the first draft of what would eventually become UNSCR 1325, outlining specific suggestions for the inclusion and protection of women (Cohn et al., 2004).

Advocates from civil society used a variety of pressure strategies. They distributed position papers, hosted seminars and briefings for diplomats, and educated the public on the importance that women play in maintaining peace. An important turning point was when the NGO Working Group organized an informal Security Council briefing, or "Arria-formula", regarding the realities of women in conflict (True-Frost, 2007). This was revolutionary because it allowed civil society to provide feedback to the Council on a matter of security, allowing women's stories to be part of the policy discussion. According to one perspective, UNSCR 1325's very existence is a powerful testament to the abilities and efforts of the NGOs that made it possible. Feminist civil society, in sum, created the argument, wrote the text, and maintained the pressure that allowed its adoption.

The UN system's insiders were a vital source of support for grassroots activism. Frequently, these UN insiders served as mediators between the member states and NGOs. Two important allies of the NGO coalition were the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which is led by Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) (True-Frost, 2007). These organizations supplied research, credibility, and pathways for policy change. Throughout the late 1990s, UNIFEM in particular had been drawing attention to women's initiatives for peace and the effects of conflict on women (Cohn et al., 2004). However, a Security Council resolution cannot be adopted without member state leadership. Therefore, in the case of UNSCR 1325, the leadership of

Member States was vital – initially demonstrated by Namibia, followed by Mali and Tunisia (How Namibia Helped Birth UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, 2020).

Furthermore, by questioning conventional paradigms that frequently ignore gender elements, feminist researchers have critically interacted with security studies. Their efforts have been crucial in promoting policies that deal with the underlying causes of gendered insecurities and in changing security discourses to be more inclusive of women's experiences. The WPS agenda's guiding principles have been strengthened by this feminist scholarly contribution, which has advanced a more inclusive view of security that goes beyond traditional masculine methodologies.

In summary, this chapter will examine the growth of the WPS agenda, including its foundational treaties and resolutions, as well as the junction of feminist ideas and security studies. The goal of this chapter is to present a thorough grasp of the attempts of international community to promote gender-inclusive approaches to peace and security while addressing the evolving dynamics of conflicts and their effects on women.

3.1. From A Convention to A Complete Agenda

The WPS agenda has been essential in recognizing and addressing the multifaceted roles of gender in both times of conflict and peacebuilding. Since the early 2000s, the complexity of gender roles in wartime as well as peacebuilding processes have begun to be understood by the global community. The recognition of "gendered nature of conflict" led to the establishment of the WPS agenda that guides the application of a "gender lens" to all aspects of peace and conflict, pushing for women's active engagement in peacebuilding (Runyan & Peterson, 2014).

WPS agenda highlights how crucial it is to involve women and girls in peacebuilding initiatives in order to succeed a lasting peace. It portrays the potential of women as the agents of change and peacemakers. This approach has become essential to the conversation around UN peacebuilding and is frequently used as the cornerstone for gender mainstreaming in UN peacebuilding initiatives.

Table 1. Four pillars of WPS agenda

Pillars	Explanation
Prevention	**Prevention** of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.
Participation	Women's equal **participation** and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels.
Protection	Women and girls are **protected** from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and their rights are protected and promoted in conflict situations.
Relief & Recovery	Specific relief needs of women are met and their capacities to act as agents in **relief and recovery** are strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, 2019, p. 5).

Table 1 shows a thorough framework for incorporating gender perspectives into peace and security initiatives that are offered by the four pillars of the WPS agenda: Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief & Recovery. They seek to safeguard women's rights and safety during conflicts, prevent gender-based violence and conflict, guarantee women's equitable involvement in decision-making, and enhance their roles in post-conflict recovery. When taken as a whole, these pillars change the idea of security from one that is militaristic and state-centered to one that is based on human security and emphasizes resilience, equality, and empowerment. Implementation in these areas is still uneven, though, with institutional emphasis frequently prioritizing protection and participation over prevention and recovery.

A century of transnational feminist movements for world peace served as the foundation for WPS agenda, which was also committed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). A significant milestone in the institutionalization of the WPS agenda within global governance was reached with Resolution 1325. Since CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 are now closely related, the WPS agenda has been included into international frameworks for women's human rights. Additionally, National Action Plans (NAPs) have solidified the WPS agenda into the

foreign and development policies of particular countries. 56% of UN Member States have adopted a NAP as of 2024 to indicate a sustained dedication to the WPS agenda, although around %30 of them are outdated and not in effect (1325 National Action Plans – An Initiative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, n.d.).

3.1.1. Foundational Events

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a landmark international agreement aimed at eradicating discrimination against women and advancing gender equality, was adopted on 18 December 1979. As a legally binding international agreement, CEDAW has had a significant role in forming international norms and regulations pertaining to women's rights in all aspects of life. Its relevance extends to establishing the fundamental concepts for following international efforts, such as those under the WPS agenda.

Building on this foundation, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), adopted in 1995 as an outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, established a significant breakthrough in the global feminist movements. As a comprehensive framework connecting gender, national security, development, economic growth, militarism, and women's empowerment, BPFA promoted less militarization and more funding for social and economic projects while highlighting the significance of power dynamics and institutions in women's lives. To ensure that choices were made with consideration for both men and women, the BPFA sought to mainstream a gender perspective into all UN policies and initiatives. A thorough and forward-thinking perspective to security in global policy was provided by this gendered approach, which connected macro and micro level policy processes from the public to the private domains (Swaine, 2019, p. 5).

This significant document set forth strategic objectives and initiatives for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality in a number of areas, including peace and security. BPFA provided a platform for future gender-sensitive policy efforts within international organizations and offered a more comprehensive

definition of gender security while “its normative status leaves it with little legal might” (Swaine, 2019, p. 5).

3.1.2. Gender Mainstreaming

These initiatives were further promoted by an evolution toward gender mainstreaming as an all-encompassing strategy. Gender mainstreaming is originated as an approach for incorporating gendered viewpoints into all policies and programs, guaranteeing that all political, economic, and societal activities consider both men’s and women’s concerns during all administrative processes. Given that human subjects are inherently gendered entities, it is challenging to comprehend relationships between subjects without actively engaging in a feminist curiosity, which is explained in the previous chapter – to investigate how gender functions in any situation (Shepherd, 2017, p. 21).

By addressing the differences in how policies affect men and women, this strategy has been essential in creating the framework for impartial peace-making efforts. The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) jointly established by the General Assembly and the Security Council in 2005, for example, was the first UN body to recognize the critical role that women play in maintaining peace and specifically include gender dimension in its founding resolutions (Shepherd, 2017, p. 68). The aspirational objectives of gender mainstreaming in promoting inclusive and sustainable peace are reflected in Shepherd’s statement that “the UN engages with peacebuilding as a practice of hope” (Shepherd, 2017, p. 2).

3.1.3. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and the Following Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), adopted in 2000, is a game-changing document for the WPS agenda. For the first time in history, a UN resolution recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and advocates for greater engagement in peace processes, the protection of their rights during and after wars, and the integration of gender perspectives in settling

disputes. UNSCR 1325 is widely recognized as the cornerstone for gender-sensitive policy-making in the field of peace and security (Shepherd, 2017, pp. 77-78). It was a "new, daring, and ambitious strategy for anti-war feminists" (Cohn, 2004, p. 3). This resolution alone was not the product of institutional transform but came from decades of international lobbying by women's rights groups and WPS advocacy groups, both within and beyond the UN system (True, 2016, p. 308).

Since then, the WPS agenda has even expanded significantly with such a committed network. Following UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions, including resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467, and 2493, to strengthen and broaden the WPS framework. Together, these resolutions show how early treaties addressing women's rights evolved into a comprehensive agenda that incorporates gender issues into international peace and security initiatives. In addition to discussing the difficulties that women encounter during conflicts, WPS agenda also emphasize their critical role to act as "agents of change" to bring about enduring peace.

Table 2. UN Security Council Resolutions Related to Women, Peace and Security

Resolution	**Year**	**Brief Summary**
UNSCR 1325	2000	Addresses the impact of conflict on women and recognizes the contribution of women in preventing and resolving conflict and their role in maintaining international peace and security.
UNSCR 1820	2008	Recognizes conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war used by warring parties to achieve military or political ends and resulting in impunity, which require strengthened efforts to end sexual violence in conflict.
UNSCR 1888	2009	Provides for more effective implementation of Resolution 1820, including by establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide high-level leadership, and establishing women protection advisers within peacekeeping missions.

Table 2. (continued)

UNSCR 1889	2009	Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, includes a strategy for increasing the number of women participating in peace talks, and calls for the development of global indicators to measure the implementation of Resolution 1325 by the UN and Member States. A set of 26 indicators have now been developed to track and account for implementation, organized into 4 Pillars: Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery. The indicators are listed in the Secretary-General's Report (S/2010/498).
UNSCR 1960	2010	Reaffirms the earlier commitments required to address sexual violence in conflict and mandates the creation of tools to combat impunity by listing perpetrators and establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements.
UNSCR 2106	2013	Requests all actors, including the Security Council, to do more to implement earlier resolutions and to combat impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Acknowledges the importance of civil society in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.
UNSCR 2122	2013	Sets in place stronger measures to improve women's participation and representation in conflict resolution, especially through leadership positions. Reaffirms that gender equality is central to achieving international peace and security. Sets out the need for humanitarian aid to ensure access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services.

Table 2. (continued)

UNSCR 2242	2015	On women's roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism and improved Security Council working methods on women, peace and security CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 (2015). Links the women, peace and security agenda to CEDAW, providing detailed guidance on implementation of the agenda.
UNSCR 2272	2016	Provides measures to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.
UNSCR 2467	2019	Calls on parties to conflicts around the world to put an end to sexual violence immediately, to prevent such acts in the future, and introduces accountability measures for perpetrators of sexual violence and calls for effective support measures for victims of sexual violence to be implemented.

Source: (Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, 2019, p. 6).

These 10 resolutions constitute the basis of the WPS agenda. The WPS agenda's categorization into four pillars closely resembles the structure of the WPS policy architecture as well as the methods in which priority is given to certain topics in practice. Table 2 shows how the framing, priorities, and language of WPS resolutions have changed over time. Early resolutions, such as UNSCR 1325 (2000), established broad normative objectives for women's involvement and protection, whereas subsequent texts, such as UNSCR 2242 (2015) and UNSCR 2467 (2019), indicate shifts in emphasis, including more specific thematic focus and new strategic interconnections. Dianne Otto (2016) divides these resolutions into two major groups. One group named "women's empowerment resolutions", including UNSCR 1325, 1889, 2122, 2242, widely addresses women's empowerment, through the recognition of women's participation and women's rights. Yet, another group named "sexual violence resolutions", including UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106, 2467, focuses on preventing sexual violence against women and protecting women and

girls. On the other hand, according to Laura J. Shepherd (2019), there have been four "protection" resolutions (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1960, and 2106), two "agenda-setting" resolutions (UNSCR 1325 and 2242), and two "participation" resolutions (UNSCR 1889 and 2122) (Shepherd, 2019, p. 4). Since "prevention" is defined differently in each of the WPS resolutions, the pillar of "prevention" considered as the "weakest 'p' in the pod" (Basu & Confortini, 2016).

3.1.4. Formation of National Action Plans (NAPs)

Member states have created National Action Plans (NAPs) in response to UNSCR 1325 in order to carry out the WPS agenda in their own national settings. Since the first NAP was created in 2005 by Denmark, more than 100 nations have created NAPs to operationalize UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions, including UNSCR 1820 (1325 National Action Plans – An Initiative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, n.d.). NAPs represent a collective recognition of women's vital role in promoting peace and security as countries commit to develop inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding initiatives that acknowledge and harness women's contributions by institutionalizing the WPS agenda principles through NAPs. Although it is not the only implementation mechanism of WPS agenda, "NAPs are conceived as the major mechanism of policy diffusion for the WPS agenda" (True, 2016, p. 309).

Developed and implemented in partnership by governments, civil society groups, and other national and international partners, NAPs function as strategic frameworks that delineate a signatory country's methodology for incorporating gender considerations into initiatives related to peace and security. With a multi-stakeholder approach, they outline pledges, goals, and initiatives to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, increase women's involvement in peace processes, and guarantee that gender considerations be at the forefront of conflict prevention and resolution tactics. On the other hand, NAPs allow us to address challenges and possibilities specific to a country and nation. Furthermore, NAPs frequently incorporate tools for tracking and evaluating progress and identifying areas for improvement.

The WPS agenda has been heavily driven by the state machinery, with only one-third of NAPs including civil society in its planning and writing. This is a troubling tendency, given that the agenda is based on women's civil society organizations and global feminist movement (Hill et al., 2003). Excluding civil society organizations from the NAP development process can result in a disconnect between WPS principles and individuals lived experiences within the state, a lack of understanding of community needs related to WPS provisions, and a failure to recognize community knowledge in plan development. The WPS agenda, which emphasizes women's involvement in state police and military forces, may become militarized if NAPs are seen "as elitist or irrelevant to the lives of the population" (Kirby & Shepherd, 2016, p. 384).

3.2. Institutional Feminism and the WPS Agenda

In address security and specific implications of conflict on women and girls, such as safeguarding them from sexual and gender-based violence, encouraging their involvement in peace and security, and bolstering their roles as peace builders in conflict prevention, the WPS agenda has been a crucial framework. However, as several studies have shown, there have been difficulties and limitations in the contextualization and implementation of the WPS agenda.

Feminist institutional theory provides valuable insights into the role of political institutions in post-conflict societies and their significance in implementing the WPS agenda. However, scholarly work on WPS has often overlooked the importance of these institutions, leading to an underestimation of their role in achieving the agenda's objectives. The institutional representation of women has been a central component of the WPS agenda from its inception, emphasizing the necessity of integrating gender perspectives into security and governance structures (Thomson, 2019, p. 4). Ensuring women's engagement in political institutions goes beyond simple representation; it is critical to convert security governance into a more inclusive framework. Integrating gender views into security institutions calls into question traditional paradigms of peace and conflict. As a result, incorporating gender considerations into security institutions makes it easier to establish a complete

security framework. Notably, we are one step closer as “the world’s largest security institution has now publicly declared that attention to gender is integral to doing security” (Cohn et al., 2004, p. 139).

Despite this institutional commitment, empirical research suggests that the original emphasis of the WPS agenda—recognizing women as active participants in peacebuilding—has gradually diminished (Anderlini et al., 2010, p. 4). Instead, feminist scholars critique the growing focus on sexual violence, which has led to a portrayal of women primarily as victims rather than as agents of peace (Heathcote & Otto, 2014, p. 2). This shift has resulted in the sidelining of women’s agency and their potential contributions to conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

Concerns regarding the institutionalization of women’s participation within the WPS framework highlight deeper structural challenges. Heathcote (2019) argues that while increasing women’s presence in decision-making processes is a stated goal of the WPS agenda, gendered norms that systematically disadvantage women often remain unchallenged (Heathcote, 2019). Consequently, formalizing women’s participation without addressing these entrenched power structures may lead to the reinforcement of specific gendered roles rather than fostering meaningful change. Institutionalization, in this sense, risks privileging certain women while failing to dismantle broader systemic inequalities.

Nonetheless, the formal language of the WPS agenda continues to emphasize participation, reflecting the agenda’s foundational vision of inclusive security. Feminism, as Youngs (2004) suggests, necessitates an ontological revisionism—an interrogation of how gendered power constructs social relations and institutional realities (Youngs, 2004, p. 77). Thus, while the institutionalization of the WPS agenda presents limitations, it also offers a platform for continued feminist engagement and advocacy aimed at transforming the structures that shape global security governance.

On the other hand, the feminist criticism highlights how concentrating primarily on women’s participation in reconciliation without questioning current power structures

might unintentionally perpetuate old gender stereotypes. According to O'Rourke (2014), the WPS resolutions include women's participation in five ways: role model, representation, inclusion, expertise, and discussion. In an effort to change global peace and security more generally, this promotes the idea of including women through quotas or other quantifiable results (O'Rourke, 2014, p. 10). For feminist scholarship to take the WPS agenda into consideration, the concept of participation is essential (Thomson, 2019, p. 7). However, involvement needs to be transformed and substantial, not just symbolic. This calls for a precise definition of meaningful participation as well as a key differentiation between tokenism and actual inclusion. Although initiatives to expand women's participation in peace and security processes are crucial, they frequently run the risk of restricting women to positions that are too specific, which reduces the agenda's capacity to bring about more significant structural and revolutionary change.

Furthermore, the debate around the WPS agenda frequently ignores institutional design and the development of organizations capable of sustaining its aims in post-conflict circumstances. There is a lack in feminist IR research on how to use the WPS framework to build effective post-conflict institutions. Addressing this gap necessitates a comprehensive knowledge of how institutional mechanisms might be constructed to guarantee the WPS agenda has a meaningful and long-term impact in varied situations (Thomson, 2019, p. 7). Incorporating feminist institutional theory into WPS studies provides an opportunity to rethink and reconnect with the revolutionary ideals that initially drove the agenda. To accomplish meaningful gender equality, entirely new feminist institutions must be created rather than fiddling with patriarchal ones. This stance stems from the understanding that integrating WPS into pre-existing state or post-conflict governance frameworks frequently perpetuate inequality while overtly promoting participation.

When creating post-conflict institutions that can achieve WPS objectives, feminist institutional theory provides helpful direction. One of the most significant contributions of feminist institutionalism is its emphasis on how institutions function; not only by means of official regulations and structure, but also through unwritten customs, practices, and informal norms. Thus, in addition to formal changes, post-

conflict institution builders are encouraged to question the hidden gendered norms of political life, such as male cultures or patronage networks. Feminist institutionalists highlight how supposedly gender-neutral institutions frequently fall short for women in practice by examining the interaction between formal and informal standards (Mackay & Murtagh, 2019, p. 11). By identifying gender-based exclusions and mapping formal and informal power systems, feminist institutional theory provides useful tools for creating inclusive post-conflict institutions. It places a strong emphasis on intersectionality and transformational inclusion, advocating that rather than being merely symbolic representation, women's participation needs to change institutional norms. By offering guidance on how institutions might integrate gender equality and uphold WPS ideals, this method closes a significant vacuum in WPS scholarship.

3.3. Feminist Criticisms Against the WPS Agenda

3.3.1. Portrayal of Women as Inherently Peaceful Human-Beings

Feminist scholars have critically examined the WPS agenda, particularly its tendency to portray women as inherently peaceful and oriented towards justice. This characterization not only oversimplifies women's diverse experiences and roles in conflict but also raises questions about the underlying objectives of the WPS framework. The foundational Resolution 1325 and its four main pillars implicitly associate women with peace, suggesting a natural predisposition towards peace-making. By classifying women as victims, peace-builders and peace-makers, the agenda raises concerns around representation and agency (Cohn et al., 2004, p. 136).

This implicit association assumes that women's descriptive representation equates to substantive representation, implying that "most women speak for all women" (Shepherd, 2011, p. 510). Such a perspective overlooks the complex realities of women's identities and experiences, excluding those who may act as agents of violence or subversion. It is acknowledged that Resolution 1325 views women as cooperative, peaceful actors who strive to improve the lives of all women. Ironically, as much as Resolution 1325 is about embracing women, since the UN expects

women to act as peacemakers and concerns the knowledge presented by women to be in a good light, “angry women” are excluded (Gibbings, 2011, p. 533). Individuals who fall outside the portrayed definition of peacefulness, which restricts the discussion to a limited representation of women’s contributions to peace initiatives.

3.3.2. Broadening the WPS agenda in the field of security and peace

The WPS agenda is a significant step in challenging and exposing masculinized norms in the sectors of security and peacebuilding. These overt and covert conventions have historically ignored women’s experiences and excluded them from security-related decision-making processes. By exposing the negative consequences of such gendered systems, the WPS agenda emphasizes the importance of resolving these exclusions in order to develop a more inclusive and effective security framework (Swaine, 2019, p. 2).

However, feminist researchers contend that the WPS agenda should go beyond just securing gender equality and problems that women face in their lives. Instead, it should highlight the transformative power of WPS resolutions by incorporating them into the larger realm of peace and security. This expansion necessitates moving beyond binary gender relationships and interacting with modern human rights discourses to handle emerging security concerns in a more holistic manner (Swaine, 2019, p. 7). Additionally, Swaine (2019) argues that a holistic approach to gendered security across all peace and security operations is necessary to overcome the isolation of the WPS agenda inside the UN Security Council and its mission. She states that attaining this objective requires two conceptual pillars: inclusion and human rights (Swaine, 2019, p. 9).

Legal experts have strongly criticized the UN Security Council’s establishment of the WPS agenda, pointing out specifically the trade-offs and limits in its conceptualization of women’s security within the “war and peace” paradigm. One major criticism raises questions regarding the legitimacy and inclusion of the WPS agenda by pointing out the systemic injustices present in the Security Council itself, where a few numbers of states continue to hold most of the decision-making

authority. In addition, the agenda's implied support for military security solutions and its dedication to women's safety are contradicted by its dependence on Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows the use of force. Resolution 1325's lack of strong enforcement measures lessens its impact even further, raising ongoing worries that women in crisis situations may not always be adequately protected even when the agenda is incorporated into national security organizations (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 3).

In feminist security studies, the gendered aspect of conflict and insecurity continues to be the primary concern. "War and insecurity cannot be understood without understanding their gendered nature," as Swaine (2019) highlights, "the dynamics of contemporary gender relations are inseparable from the insidious influence of norms of militarism and militarized masculinities that overtly and covertly infuse our societies" (Swaine, 2019, p. 13). Beyond the institutionalization of gender perspectives in security governance, Schuurman (2015) advocates for a deeper internalization of gender within security institutions, arguing that "beyond institutionalizing gender, we must now internalize it" (Schuurman, 2015, p. 3). This calls for a fundamental change in perspective and calls for long-term transformation initiatives that involve training, education, and collaboration with civil society groups. In order to guarantee that gender concerns continue to be a fundamental component of security decisions, institutions like civil society advisory boards can improve accountability and openness (Schuurman, 2015, p. 4). This viewpoint questions established security paradigms and urges a reconsideration of the ways in which gendered power dynamics influence peace and conflict processes.

3.3.3. The Absence of Relevance with Current Security Challenges

The challenge for global leadership is to keep the WPS agenda relevant in the face of constantly changing security challenges, including hybrid warfare and extremist violence. To successfully address these issues, political and security leadership must include a gender perspective into a variety of security policy domains. To guarantee a more robust and inclusive security framework, this involves bolstering gender equality programs inside security institutions and among partner countries

(Schuurman, 2015, p. 5). These revelations highlight the need to incorporate gender viewpoints into security governance frameworks as a practical means of promoting peace and stability, not only as a normative pledge.

The gendered character of legal classifications, which frequently make distinctions between "public" and "private" domains of violence in ways that conceal the entire scope of women's experiences in conflict, serves as extra encouragement for this criticism. The existing security frameworks typically acknowledge violence committed by male fighters in public areas but ignore violence in private areas, such as intimate partner violence and domestic abuse, which frequently intensify during and after conflicts. Feminist scholars contend that by focusing on sexual threats rather than addressing more general injustices, this duality not only restricts the legal acknowledgment of gendered damages but also enables states to uphold patriarchal authority. Therefore, even while the WPS agenda promotes gender concerns in security governance, it runs the danger of strengthening rather than reducing current inequality in power (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 5).

The agenda's limited focus on sexual violence in armed conflict, especially rape, at the expense of tackling the larger spectrum of gendered violence that endures during and after war is another significant criticism. The WPS strategy has unintentionally neglected the daily violence women face in both wartime and post-conflict nations by elevating conflict-related sexual assault to the status of an exceptional category of suffering. This narrow focus has led to insufficient responsibility and reparations for a variety of violations, neglecting to acknowledge the ways that systematic and structural violence against women occurs outside of the battlefield (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 4).

3.3.4. The External Action Focus and Selective Implementation of the WPS Agenda

UNSCR 1325 was envisioned as a transformative framework to prevent conflict and foster peace globally, however its implementation has largely been shaped by state interests, leading to a selective application of its principles. Governments have often

prioritized the agenda's relevance in their external actions beyond their borders while downplaying its applicability to domestic settings. For instance, the United Kingdom has resisted applying UNSCR 1325 to Northern Ireland, while India has failed to acknowledge its domestic significance (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 7). This tendency reflects a larger trend in which governments use the WPS agenda to bolster their foreign policy goals rather than address gendered security norms in internal action. The establishment of National Action Plans (NAPs) is a significant tool for this selective involvement, since they usually highlight a state's role in supporting WPS in other countries rather than addressing internal gender and security concerns. The 2016 National Action Plan of the United States (US), for example, demonstrates how WPS can be integrated within their broader international strategies while still maintaining a narrow, context-specific focus (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019).

The WPS agenda's limited understanding of conflict is one of its main drawbacks. WPS has mostly stayed focused on conventional inter-state warfare and high-profile peace talks, despite the frequency of internal armed conflicts, occupation-related conflicts, and counterterrorism operations. The agenda's claims to universality are undermined by the omission of different conflict-affected environments, especially those suffering protracted internal violence or hybrid warfare. Most conflicts now arise outside the legal systems the WPS agenda usually interacts with, notably those specified by the Geneva Conventions (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 7), which form the foundation of international humanitarian law by regulating conduct in armed conflict and ensuring protection for civilians and non-combatants. However, these norms are largely concerned with formal, interstate warfare and scenarios involving unambiguous sides to a conflict, leaving a void in addressing the complexities of contemporary wars such as insurgencies, asymmetric warfare, and transnational terrorism. As a result, the WPS framework, which is intimately related to these traditional legal standards, frequently struggles to respond to situations that fall beyond the Geneva paradigm.

This scattered and uneven application highlights WPS's vulnerability to shifting political agendas, in which state interests determine the extent to which its principles are followed. As a result, the agenda's impact is unequal, with women in many

conflict-affected areas being excluded from its protective and participative mechanisms.

3.3.5. Institutional Challenges and the Need for a Stronger Accountability Framework

The implementation of the WPS agenda inside the United Nations system is characterized by institutional fragmentation, with numerous main entities—including the Department of Political Affairs, Department for Peacekeeping Operations, and UN Women—all playing a role in promoting its mandates. However, despite UN Women's mandate to coordinate WPS initiatives and hold actors responsible, the organization lacks the requisite enforcement measures to ensure compliance. The implementation of WPS is also influenced by the institutional environment in which it functions. Although the UN has approved the agenda, individual UN agencies, ministries, and national governments are primarily responsible for carrying it out within the confines of their own institutional mandates and political constraints (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 11).

A fragmented and frequently disorganized approach has resulted from the lack of a centralized management or implementation mechanism, restricting the agenda's efficacy beyond normative commitments (Ní Aoláin & Valji, 2019, p. 2). Without defined accountability systems, the WPS agenda struggles to translate policy discourse into actual legislative and operational outcomes. It is a conceptual resolution with no formalized follow-up procedures and simply ambiguous phrasing. As a result, the normative requirement of UNSCR 1325 has outweighed the text's level of legal significance and implementation (Olsson & Gizelis, 2019, p. 3). Instead of serving as a globally binding framework, this fragmented approach has resulted in different interpretations and implementation of WPS principles, frequently corresponding to larger political and diplomatic goals.

Understanding these structural and geopolitical dynamics is essential to critically assessing both the achievements and limitations of the WPS agenda within the global security architecture. The agenda's aims and objectives must vary in order to

promote significant change; it must take into account academic discussions and encourage a variety of transformational approaches. To achieve the full potential of the agenda, it is imperative to strengthen institutional monitoring, give UN Women tangible accountability mechanisms, and make sure that WPS principles have a greater impact on legislation.

In conclusion, the WPS agenda, while useful in combating masculinized security norms, has received various criticisms that emphasize its shortcomings in adequately addressing gendered security problems. One significant criticism is that it places too much dependence on institutionalization inside official security organizations, which frequently results in gender views being viewed as bureaucratic checklists rather than revolutionary change tools. Scholars contend that these initiatives will be ineffective until we internalize gender awareness and modify our beliefs. By expanding the scope of the WPS agenda beyond its initial institutional framework, feminist study continues to advocate for revolutionary change in the field of peace and security.

Furthermore, the agenda is frequently confined by old security frameworks, restricting its capacity to confront modern challenges such as hybrid warfare and extremist violence in a gender-responsive way. Another notable critique is that the WPS agenda primarily depicts women as victims or peacebuilders, ignoring their agency in positions that challenge this dichotomy. This “no angry women” narrative perpetuates a restricted view of women’s responsibilities in conflict and security and limits women presence with only “participation”. Furthermore, the agenda remains largely isolated inside the UN Security Council, failing to fully incorporate gender issues into all peace and security measures. Without greater inclusion in global security governance, its effect is limited. Finally, the absence of strong accountability and enforcement measures undermines the agenda’s efficacy, as pledges to gender equality in security policy do not always translate into actual action. Feminist researchers emphasize the need to go beyond formal institutional mandates by embedding gender perspectives across all areas of security governance and ensuring sustained civil society engagement to promote accountability and uphold the transformative aims of the WPS agenda.

CHAPTER 4

EUROPEAN UNION'S IMPLEMENTATION OF WPS AGENDA

> "The EU recognizes the close links between the issues of peace, security, development and gender equality. Therefore, there is not only the need to promote the participation and the protection of women in conflict situations and peace building but also the need to ensure that these actions are supported by wider development considerations, such as the promotion of women's economic security and opportunities and their access to health services and education." (Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, 2008)

The European Union (EU) has shown that it is committed to furthering the WPS agenda in accordance with the fundamental principles of UNSCR 1325. Scholars suggests that "It (gender equality) is part of the European Union's DNA" (Guerrina & Wright, 2016). This chapter looks at how the EU is putting the WPS agenda into practice, with a particular emphasis on how gender considerations are included into its Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Among the important questions answered are: In what ways is the EU framework operationalizing the WPS agenda? How does the EU's soft power contribute to the advancement of UNSCR 1325? What are the inherent advantages and disadvantages of the EU's strategy for implementing WPS?

The EU's approach to WPS is multifaceted, involving various institutions and policy instruments. The European External Action Service (EEAS) plays a leading role, with the Principal Advisor on Gender and on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 coordinating efforts across EU bodies and member states. Notwithstanding these frameworks, there are still obstacles to the WPS agenda's implementation, including as the need for weak enforcement tools and a dependence on soft incentives. The EU's soft power strategy is reflected in its emphasis on political discourse and

diplomatic engagement; however, this approach occasionally leads to the fragmented and uneven implementation of WPS concepts in various circumstances. For example, although most EU member states have created National Action Plans (NAPs) to carry out UNSCR 1325, the scope and content of these plans differ greatly, resulting in differences in implementation and results.

Furthermore, member state pledges differ, which affects the EU's ability to advance gender equality in its external actions. The EU's collaborative efforts are complicated by the opposition of certain member states to gender equality initiatives. This chapter focuses on the EU's implementation of the WPS agenda, examining the interactions between its institutional frameworks, member states and varied political strategies. The goal of this research is to provide readers with a thorough grasp of the EU's approach to the WPS agenda and the instruments in implementing it in a way that is both coherent and successful.

4.1. Measures Undertaken by the Council of the European Union for Implementing the WPS Agenda

To incorporate the WPS agenda into its operations and policies, the EU has adopted a number of actions. These actions reveal an understanding of the need for an all-encompassing and formalized strategy to carry out UNSCR 1325 and 1820. A foundational instrument was the adoption of a *Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on WPS* in 2008, wherein the WPS strategy and the objective of gender equality in peace and security initiatives were publicly approved by the EU. According to this *Comprehensive Approach* document, a few measures have been undertaken by the EU. Applauded for supporting these important resolutions, the wording of this document was interpreted as the EU's pledge to advance gender mainstreaming in all its foreign policy and security initiatives. But because it was written in broad strokes, the language "failed to detail what exactly was meant by a gender perspective, how it should be accomplished and who would be responsible for its implementation" (Almqvist, 2021). Over time, the EU has adopted specific action plans and structures for furthering WPS. For example, the EU's first and second Gender Action Plans

(GAP I 2010-2015 and GAP II 2016-2020) reiterated their commitment to protecting women and girls from violence and increasing women's engagement in peacebuilding. Additionally, the EU Action Plan on WPS (2019–2024) in 2019 and a new EU Strategic Approach to WPS by the Council of the EU in 2018 was adopted (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023). These documents jointly delineated specific priority areas (such as prevention, protection, relief, and recovery) and principles (participation, gender mainstreaming, and setting an example) for WPS integration. Unlike previous generic pronouncements, the newest Action Plan advocates for the inclusion of WPS in EU finance instruments, budgeting for gender advisers, and mandatory gender training.

Most recently, the EU's Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025) raised WPS to a single priority area, with the goal of achieving a more comprehensive approach to gender equality in external action (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023). GAP III enhances WPS ambitions by, for example, establishing criteria such as at least 33% female engagement in EU peace operations and mandating that by 2025, 85% of all new EU external measures should contribute to gender equality, including WPS objectives (Almqvist, 2021). The EU's strategy is based on political commitment, as evidenced by its active participation in pertinent international procedures and support for the resolutions. These policy tools indicate the EU's commitment to integrate the WPS agenda across its external relations. Support for the creation of a European Network of Women in Political and Economic Decision-Making is one of the political initiatives, with the goal of boosting the number of women in leadership roles in the fields of peace and security (Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, 2008). However, this network endeavor is currently dormant after a brief time of effectiveness. On the other hand, two committees in Parliament oversee supervising the EU's implementation of UNSCR 1325: the FEMM committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee – specifically, the subcommittees on security and defense (SEDE) and human rights (DROI) (Guerrina & Wright, 2016).

In addition to high-level policies, the EU has created institutional frameworks and training programs to help implement WPS. To encourage gender-focused initiatives,

it established an Informal Task Force on UNSCR 1325 in 2009. The Women, Peace, and Security Task Force was established in Brussels with the intention of fostering a uniform approach to gender-related issues throughout EU institutions and enhancing inter-institutional collaboration. In 2015, the EU nominated Mara Marinaki as its first Principal Advisor/EEAS Gender Advisor on WPS to serve as a leader and coordinate the implementation of WPS across EU institutions (Almqvist, 2021). Since then, EU officials in Brussels and the field have routinely participated in specific training programs on gender equality and WPS, and gender focal points and advisers have been assigned to EU delegations and CSDP missions. According to civil society observers and experts, this position has provided leadership to ensure gender equality and GEWE are at the center of the EU's external action (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023). Notably, the inclusion of gender advisers or units in every CSDP mission to support WPS aims is an example of how all EU military and civilian operations are now required to incorporate a gender perspective and human rights concerns in their mandates and actions (Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, EEAS, n.d.). This has been closely linked to field-level engagement: EU crisis management missions (such as those in Kosovo, Mali, and Somalia) have integrated WPS through training peacekeepers on sexual violence prevention, encouraging women's involvement in local peace processes, and interacting with local women's organizations.

Building capacity and providing training are essential components of the EU's implementation strategy. It is essential that the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) missions and activities incorporate understanding of UNSCR 1325. To ensure that both armed forces and civilian personnel have the skills and resources to support gender-sensitive practices, the European Security and Defense College (ESDC) must incorporate gender perspectives into all pertinent training programs. In addition, the European Commission hosts monthly training sessions in its delegations and at its headquarters, with a focus on general gender training and WPS. Training programs in critical areas such as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), and electoral observer missions are always supposed to incorporate gender (Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace

and Security, 2008). Finally, including WPS concerns in sectoral operations guarantees that gender is viewed as a cross-cutting issue rather than a compartmentalized one. The EU emphasizes the need to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and screening former fighters in DDR procedures to prevent abusers from being reintegrated without sufficient accountability. The EU's comprehensive vision of peace and security that incorporates and empowers women at all levels is aimed to be strengthened by the growing mainstreaming of gender-sensitive measures in fields including SSR, governance, economic security, civil society assistance, health, education, and humanitarian aid.

4.2. National Action Plans (NAPs)

The EU encourages third countries to create and implement National Action Plans (NAPs) that align with the WPS agenda at the national and regional levels. This assistance is a component of the EU's broader commitment to institutional support and capacity building. Recognizing the necessity of multilateral partnerships to address gender components in peace and security, the EU actively supports the WPS framework in its dealings with regional organizations like the African Union and others (Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, 2008). Additionally, the EU mainstreams women into its development and diplomatic efforts and actively supports NAPs on WPS. NAPs for UNSCR 1325 have been adopted by several EU member states (as well as partner nations), frequently with encouragement and help from EU financing and advice (Desmidt & Davis, 2019). In addition to working to coordinate reporting on WPS among the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), and member states, the EU offers partners financial and technical support to help them create their own WPS strategy. Furthermore, larger external policy frameworks have included the WPS agenda (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023).

4.3. The EU's Gender Action Plans (GAPs)

In line with the goals of the WPS agenda, the EU has established a number of Gender Action Plans (GAPs) to promote gender equality and women's empowerment within

its foreign policies. These strategies are necessary to ensure that initiatives support the advancement of women's rights and involvement in peace and security processes by integrating gender views into all aspects of the EU's external action. Since sustained peace and security cannot be achieved without the full involvement and empowerment of women and girls, the main goal of these action plans is to offer a strategic and cogent approach to advancing gender equality internationally. The EU hopes to avoid gender-based violence, address structural inequality, and encourage women's active participation in conflict prevention and resolution by putting these policies into action through GAPs. Three GAPs have been introduced by the EU thus far. These initiatives illustrate the EU's commitment to putting policy pledges into action, ensuring that gender concerns are routinely integrated into its foreign activities.

The first framework for incorporating gender issues into EU development assistance was established under GAP I (2010–2015). It established a three-pronged strategy that included political debate, comprehensive gender mainstreaming across sectors, and targeted activities. To combat gender-based violence, support partner nations in implementing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (e.g. UN Security Council Resolution 1325), and build institutional capacity and funding for gender equality, it outlined nine objectives with corresponding actions and indicators (O'Connell, 2013, p. 5). Protecting women and girls in crisis situations and promoting their involvement in peace initiatives were the aims of GAP I, an extensive effort that linked to WPS goals. Its influence and enforcement were, however, constrained by strategic deficiencies and inadequate accountability. The focus was broadened to encompass all external contacts in GAP II (2016–2020), which emphasized the necessity of gender mainstreaming in a variety of areas.

By prioritizing gender equality across all EU external action areas, beyond development, in accordance with global frameworks such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the second Gender Action Plan (GAP II, 2016–2020) built upon these foundations and boosted the ambition (Ioannides, 2017, p. 20). Adopted with Council support, GAP II sought a "institutional cultural shift" (Joint Staff Working Document EU Gender Action Plan II 'Gender Equality and Women's

Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020' Annual Implementation Report 2016 - EU Monitor, n.d.) across EU organizations to better fulfill gender obligations and established thematic focus areas (e.g., women's political engagement, socio-economic empowerment, and physical integrity).

The WPS commitments to protect women from sexual abuse and to ensure their equitable involvement in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding efforts were reaffirmed in the GAP II. It set a goal for 85% of new EU initiatives to be gender-sensitive by 2020, required gender analysis for all new external activities, (Joint Staff Working Document EU Gender Action Plan II 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020' Annual Implementation Report 2016 - EU Monitor, n.d.) improved monitoring and accountability systems, and created an annual reporting structure. However, evaluations showed difficulties in putting policy into practice, including the perception that gender mainstreaming is a "tick-box" exercise, a lack of high-level supervision, and a limited influence on certain groups (Allwood, 2018, p. 4). Strong enforcement and cogent integration into all facets of foreign policy were absent from GAP II.

All things considered, GAP I and II created a framework of policies that connected gender equality and the WPS agenda in EU external action, and they made little but significant strides (e.g., increasing awareness and incorporating gender issues into development programming). However, requests for a more ambitious and cohesive approach were sparked by their lack of coherence, constant high-level buy-in, and noticeable impact. The current plan, GAP III (2021–2025) aims to accelerate progress on gender equality by establishing aggressive goals, such making sure that by 2025, 85% of all new external initiatives contribute to this objective. GAP III, which aims to strengthen result-oriented accountability in EU foreign policy and for the first time elevates WPS as a separate thematic priority, was designed with these lessons in mind. This change aims to improve the EU's practical execution of the WPS agenda and fill up the gaps left by the previous action plans.

4.3.1. The EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III)

> "The transformational and intersectional approaches promoted by the GAP III present an important innovation of the GAP III versus previous GAPs. In principle, given the integration of WPS as a thematic area of engagement for the GAP III, WPS should be promoted in a manner that takes into account transformative and intersectional approaches" (Desmidt, 2021, p. 7).

The EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III) provides a strategic framework for advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls worldwide. GAP III, which was launched in November 2020, expands on earlier initiatives to address persisting gender inequality by integrating gender concerns into all aspects of EU external policy and activities, in other words gender mainstreaming. Adopted for the years 2021–2025, GAP III represents a major shift in the EU's strategy for advancing gender equality through external action. By tackling the systemic causes of gender inequality and incorporating a feminist perspective into every area of EU external engagement, GAP III seeks to create revolutionary change rather than just incorporate gender considerations into development policy, building on the achievements of its predecessors (GAP I and II). The EU's understanding that addressing gender gaps necessitates a fundamental change in the way policies are conceived, carried out, and assessed is reflected in this plan. By specifically including men and boys in initiatives to combat corrosive gender stereotypes, GAP III significantly broadens the scope of gender policy and strengthens the agenda's intersectional and inclusive stance. In doing so, it supports systemic change rather than discrete initiatives, which is consistent with the larger objectives of the WPS agenda.

4.3.2. Five Key Pillars of GAP III: A Transformative Framework for Gender Equality in EU External Action

GAP III is structured around five interconnected fundamental pillars, each of which helps to make gender equality mainstream in EU foreign policy and development cooperation. The first pillar, Integrating Gender Equality Across All Actions, sets a bold goal: by 2025, at least 85% of all new EU external actions must contribute to

gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This commitment guarantees that traditionally "gender-neutral" industries like as infrastructure, digitalization, energy, and agriculture are reassessed with a gender-sensitive perspective. It advocates for the integration of gender analysis and objectives into the whole policy and project cycle, ensuring that gender equality is no longer limited to the social or human rights sectors, but rather becomes a cross-cutting priority across all EU programs.

The second pillar, A Collaborative Strategic Vision, fosters coordinated execution by fostering cooperative programming and strategic alignment across EU institutions, Member States, and foreign partners. This strategy is based on evidence-based policies, with detailed gender studies and regular interactions with civil society groups and women's rights activists at the national and regional levels. The goal is to adjust gender equality measures to local situations while maintaining EU unity and consistency in external interactions.

The third pillar, Accelerating Progress in Thematic Areas, focuses efforts on crucial problems such as gender-based violence, economic and social rights, access to health care (including sexual and reproductive health and rights), and education. This pillar also clearly integrates the WPS agenda into the larger external action framework, ensuring that gender equality principles are applied to peacebuilding, security sector reform, and conflict prevention. Furthermore, GAP III integrates gender policy with current EU goals including the green transition and digital transformation, indicating a forward-thinking, intersectional perspective on security and development.

The fourth pillar, Leading by Example, demonstrates the EU's internal commitment to demonstrating the principles that it supports internationally. It advocates gender-balanced leadership and representation at all levels of political and administrative decision-making in EU institutions. Through tangible institutional reforms, the EU hopes to build a gender-responsive culture that influences both internal governance and external credibility, so improving its position as a normative player in global gender policy. Finally, the fifth pillar, Measuring Results, establishes thorough monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) structure to evaluate the EU's

performance and influence on global gender equality. GAP III calls for increased openness, accountability, and data-driven evaluation, as well as public progress and outcomes reporting. By concentrating on outcome-based metrics, the strategy goes beyond input monitoring and aims to show actual changes in the lives of women and girls in partner nations.

In conclusion, the five pillars of GAP III support the EU's strategic objective to be a global leader in gender equality, while also addressing long-standing criticisms of previous gender action plans. GAP III provides a more robust framework for implementing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and strengthening the EU's normative effect on global gender governance by focusing more on coherence, outcomes, and institutional change.

4.3.3. Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III

The methodology used in the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III has a considerable impact on the plan's perceived effectiveness, as it employs a theory-based approach using mixed methods. The concept was based on various case studies, with data collection activities such as desk and field work included in the interim phase. Data collection and analysis were led by an evaluation matrix based on four evaluation questions. An online poll, focus groups, remote and in-person interviews, mapping of EU external action, and a review of the literature were among the methods and tools used. Over 375 interlocutors were contacted for the evaluation, including governments, civil society leaders, UN agencies, and representatives of the EU and EU Member States (MS). During regional focus group talks, 15 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) were consulted. Gender Focal Points and Heads of Cooperation at EU Delegations, as well as Gender Experts and Focal Points of other departments, were the target of an e-survey that was also carried out. 434 people were contacted, and 150 of them responded.

The EU's GAP III, which aims to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment, suffers internal constraints due to a lack of financial and human resources, demonstrating a gap between ambition and capacity to successfully carry

out the plan, despite its stated goals. The WPS agenda has lagged behind the overall GEWE mainstreaming agenda. The instruments used to implement GAP III and the WPS Action Plan are not well aligned, as the WPS Action Plan's indicators are not necessarily appropriate for action papers. This reveals a disconnect between the EU's strategic goals and the real-world implementation of GAP III (MacKellar et al., 2023, p. 37).

4.4. Country Specific Action through Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs)

The purpose of CLIPs (Country Level Implementation Plans) is to provide directions on how the goals of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III should be pursued at the national level. They are meant to improve the country-level programming, planning, and oversight of EU assistance for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), as well as the associated political and policy discourse. According to the CLIP framework, CLIPs support programmatic and political commitments to gender equality. CLIPs vary in quality and form, but they are often based on gender analysis particular to a given nation. The Gender Country Profile (GCP), which forms the foundation of the CLIP's analytical portion, is inextricably linked to CLIP. GAP III's thematic priorities are usually reflected in CLIPs, which provide the option to select the most significant.

Since CLIPs are designed to adapt GAP III objectives to the national level, their differing quality can have a substantial impact on GAP III's overall performance. As programming progresses downstream toward real implementation, high-level pledges to GEWE often become less clear. Although Brussels Headquarters has thorough guidelines, CLIPs differ greatly in shape, content, and quality. The availability, ownership, and caliber of gender analysis specific to a given nation have a significant impact on the quality of CLIPs. Some political actors, frequently in a negative way, link their GEWE obligations under international law to "Western" or European norms. Therefore, external action continues to be heavily reliant on the national political and cultural settings in the countries where it operates, notwithstanding the EU's efforts to adopt GEWE and the GAP III principles and thematic goals within the EU's institutional structure (MacKellar et al., 2023, p. 15).

EUDs in several countries hired outside experts to create GCPs and CLIPs, which is a two-edged sword. Using external expertise was a wise move when they collaborated closely with the GFP, possibly even incorporating training and capacity building into their work. In other instances, the commissioning of outside expertise was only a way to delegate a duty that the EUD lacked the credibility to carry out. At EUD level, CLIP awareness varies, with EU MS and civil society taking the lead in some cases. However, the government is less likely to be aware of and take ownership. Even, where staff participation in the drafting process varied from minimal to high, variable CLIP awareness and buy-in are evident (MacKellar et al., 2023, p. 20). The drafting of the CLIP did not always ensure its vital role in connecting a country's gender context, priorities, proposed actions, and the GAP III goal. Despite increased emphasis on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), there is more continuity than change in the real support provided by EU external action. The connection between the country's gender situation, priorities, and suggested actions varies greatly, and high-level pledges to GEWE become less clear as programming progresses towards real implementation (MacKellar et al., 2023, p. 50).

4.5. Promoting WPS Externally: EU's Soft Power and Partnerships

The EU frequently uses soft power - the power of example, persuasion, and collaboration - to push the WPS agenda across the world. The EU, branding itself as a normative power, seeks to set a good example in gender equality and utilize its influence to persuade other international players to follow WPS principles. One way it accomplishes this is through diplomatic and security cooperation. The EU has collaborated extensively with organizations such as NATO and the African Union (AU) to include WPS into their joint activities. Notably, EU-NATO collaboration in recent years has expressly included WPS as a joint objective. In 2017, the EU and NATO agreed on additional steps to strengthen collaboration, including promoting women's involvement in peace and security (EU and NATO Cooperation to Expand to New Areas, Including Counter-Terror; Military Mobility; Women, Peace and Security, EEAS, n.d.). This has resulted in frequent EU-NATO meetings on gender advisers, cooperative training programs, and the sharing of best practices for

implementing WPS in military operations. Similarly, the EU works with the AU on WPS issues.

The EU and AU support the WPS agenda, and 1325 National Action Plans have been established by African nations with EU backing. The EU has contributed financial resources and expertise to African Union peace and security projects aimed at strengthening women's roles in conflict prevention and negotiation throughout Africa. However, studies have found that until recently, EU and AU activities on WPS operated on "parallel tracks" - theoretically aligned but executed by distinct organizations with little coordination. To address this, the EU has begun to encourage more collaborative conferences and cross-organizational reporting on WPS, with the goal of creating a more cohesive strategy with the AU (Desmidt & Davis, 2019). The EU fosters women's engagement in peace processes in other international arenas through its development aid and security cooperation initiatives, as well as by assisting UN organizations (such as UN Women) and regional networks in building local capability. The GAP III also incorporates statistics derived from regional efforts such as The Spotlight Initiative, an EU-UN cooperation aimed at eliminating all kinds of violence against women and children by 2030. Additionally, WPS was selected as the top priority in the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Crisis Management and Peace Operations for the 2019–2021 timeframe (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023).

While the EU certainly uses soft power to promote WPS standards overseas, it is unclear if the WPS agenda is applied consistently across various situations. Observers remark that the EU prefers to portray WPS as an external-facing goal - something to progress in conflict zones and other nations - but is less likely to apply the same lens inward or in sectors that are not traditionally viewed as "foreign policy". Research on EU CSDP operations indicates that EU troops often regard gender inequality and violence as "out there" in non-European countries, rather than as issues involving the EU or its member states (Challenges Implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in EU Peacekeeping - War Prevention Initiative, 2018). The EU may enthusiastically support women's participation in peace talks in Africa or Asia but give relatively little consideration to gender-related

aspects of security issues in Europe (e.g., the treatment of women migrants or the role of women in counterterrorism). This externalizing mindset can result in inconsistency. Furthermore, as was mentioned, not every member state adheres to WPS principles consistently, which might undermine the EU's message. If certain EU nations violate such principles at home, the legitimacy of the EU's external WPS advocacy is damaged. Consistency across contexts also entails doing what one preaches - for the EU to be a credible norm-setter, it must demonstrate WPS implementation in its own bodies and close surroundings, rather than simply expecting others to do so.

However, to increase uniformity, the EU has demonstrated instances of self-reflection and adjustment of course. Part of the reason for setting internal gender goals, such having 33% of women in EU peace operations by 2025 and requiring gender training for all employees, is to make sure the EU gets its "house in order" so it can lead the world more effectively. The need for internal consistency is also demonstrated by the appointment of a senior WPS adviser and requests for a specific Council working group on gender (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023). The EU may increase its soft power, or its legitimacy to influence others, by reinforcing internal implementation. The EU aims to "lead by example" in its interactions with the outside world, a goal that is made clear in its WPS Strategic Approach (Almqvist, 2021). This entails promoting WPS in speeches and diplomatic endeavors as well as demonstrating how WPS has been successfully included into EU missions and funding. To urge the UN, NATO, and regional allies to follow suit, the EU, for example, frequently draws attention to lessons learned from its peacekeeping deployments where gender advisors have had an influence (Challenges Implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in EU Peacekeeping - War Prevention Initiative, 2018). Additionally, it makes use of global platforms to exchange experiences and inspire action, such as the annual WPS debates held by the UN Security Council and the worldwide WPS Focal Points Network.

In conclusion, the EU's collaborations and attempts to disseminate norms demonstrate how it uses soft power to advance the WPS agenda. By establishing guidelines, providing funds for initiatives, and participating in policy discussions

with other groups, it actively supports women's involvement and protection in global peace and security. However, this strategy's efficacy depends on how reliable and consistent the EU is. The EU has made internal strides and made significant pledges, but its normative power is still being tempered by member-state differences and inconsistent implementation. Analysts contend that the EU would better fulfil its leadership position and really represent the ideals it aims to export if WPS is used in a more consistent and transformative way, both within and globally (Guerrina & Wright, 2016). The EU has the potential to greatly advance the global WPS agenda by using its advocacy and role modelling to bring its commitments into line with its actions.

4.6. WPS Implementation in the International Context: Stance of Russia and China

In the 25th anniversary of WPS agenda, its implementation faces significant challenges, which are caused by a combination of intensifying international conflicts and ingrained political opposition. At the same time as financing for vital women-led organizations is being cut, the number of ongoing conflicts is at its highest level since 1946. The emphasis on militarism over equality and development has coincided with a notable 9.4% increase in global military spending from 2023 to 2024 (The Women, Peace and Security Agenda, 2025). Crucially, the agenda encounters distinct ideological opposition inside the UN, which takes the form of opposition to particular "gender-related terminology" and poses a danger to the long-standing legal safeguards for women and girls (Women, Peace and Security, 2025, p. 8).

Although WPS agenda has been strongly promoted by the EU, the adoption of these norms has not been even among the UN Security Council members. Understanding these differences is crucial for evaluating the agenda's coherence and challenges in the international context. Both China and Russia have recently expressed a hesitancy regarding the expansion of these UN norms, although they officially support the WPS agenda. Two Permanent Members (P5) of the UN Security Council frequently give in to national solutions and oppose strong accountability terminology, which

leads to voting and discourse that occasionally disconnects with WPS texts. These divergent approaches illustrate the WPS norms are being contested in the international arena.

According to WPS Index 2023/24 by Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security, both the Russian Federation, ranking 56 out of 177, and the People's Republic of China, ranking 82 out of 177, perform noticeably worse than the top-ranked liberal democracies (Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/24: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women, 2023). This discrepancy shows that, despite their open diplomatic engagement with WPS, these states have not fully embraced the agenda's core principles of justice and inclusion, making it abundantly evident that political and ideological agendas take precedence over actual WPS implementation.

Opposition to the WPS agenda is frequently carried out by means of targeted, detailed opposition directed at certain terms that are thought to be excessively politically invasive. The US, Russia, and China objected to the inclusion of specific wording in the final draft of UNSCR 2493. China and Russia's opposition to Resolution 2493's reference of women's human rights defenders (WHRD) is a noteworthy example of this sort of a pushback against women's rights and security (Sapiano & Raghuvanshi, 2024, p. 681). This refusal is very symbolic, indicating an ideological reluctance to provide civil society actors international protection, especially those who would oppose state authority on fragile gender and human rights matters domestically. On the other hand, the United States lobbied for the removal of terminology on sexual and reproductive health in the draft of UNSCR 2467. The removal of this terminology is important not only because it has harmed the WPS agenda's recognition of the need for sexual and reproductive health services, but also because it may pave the way for challenges to norms outside of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Mechanisms for accountability are also subject to this deliberate pushback. WPS resolutions continuously aim to increase international responsibility for gender-based violence in conflict. However, China and Russia are actively trying to prevent the

formation of legally binding international monitoring by abstaining from resolutions pertaining to sexual assault in war (such as UNSCR 2331 and UNSCR 2467). This joint effort is meant to minimize the possibility of external judicial or political pressure by guaranteeing that the state retains solid and sole authority over the enforcement of protection obligations. Russia and China's common stance centers on a strong defense of state sovereignty and a concerted attempt to soften mandatory language pertaining to political participation, individual rights, and accountability procedures. Therefore, WPS discussions turns into a new "competitive space" (McInnis et al., 2024, p. 5) over the future structure of multilateral governance.

Moscow has said clearly that the national governments are frequently better equipped to address matters pertaining to women's rights and presents the UN as a subsidiary that may assist national initiatives. Additionally, officials have expressed disapproval of the broad "gender-rights" terminology. The WPS agenda "is about the protection of women and equality between men and women in the context of armed conflict; it is not about gender and other neoliberal concepts," (Nebenzia, 2025) as Permanent Representative Vassily Nebenzia stated at the UNSC Open Debate on the 25th Anniversary of Women, Peace and Security Resolution in 2025. Notably, Russia frequently abstains from severe actions against sexual violence. For example, both Russia and China abstained from UNSCR 2467 in April 2019 on sexual violence connected to conflicts (Seelinger, 2019).

China frequently highlights the developmental, non-ideological components of WPS. According to an interview with Yeonju Jung who is an IR scholar, Chinese gender statements are "less political" than those made in the West (Jung, 2024, p. 3). Beijing emphasizes women's economic empowerment while ignoring politically sensitive topics like sexual orientation and sexual/reproductive health. China apparently views the agenda as a foreign policy instrument rather than a human rights issue, and it lacks a national WPS Action Plan. China formally emphasizes sovereignty as well as she has maintained that the state in question has "primary responsibility" for dealing with crimes against women (Cong, 2025). All things considered, Beijing defines WPS objective in terms of development, health, and conflict resolution while mostly

ignoring divisive “human rights” terminology that goes beyond simple condemnations of violence.

The geopolitical tensions and inherent normative differences involving China and Russia, two Permanent Members, are increasingly influencing the direction of the WPS agenda inside the UNSC. Although both nations publicly support the WPS agenda by frequently taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO), deploying women peacekeepers, and giving specific financial assistance to associated organizations, their actual involvement shows a strategic and ideological departure from the liberal international norms upheld by the agenda’s main components. Their common stance centers on a strong defense of state sovereignty and a concerted attempt to weakening obligations pertaining to political participation, human rights, and accountability procedures.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATING THE EU'S IMPLEMENTATION OF WPS AGENDA

5.1. Policy Effectiveness Perspective: Strengths and Weaknesses

From a policy effectiveness aspect, the EU has established a strong infrastructure for executing the WPS agenda, but the results have been varied. On the positive side, the EU has implemented several WPS-specific initiatives, action plans, and instruments. The Comprehensive Approach to the EU's Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820, issued in 2008, highlighted the EU's intention to include WPS standards into its foreign actions. In the years following, the policy framework developed considerably. The Council's EU Strategic Approach to WPS (2018) and the EU Action Plan on WPS (2019-2024) made significant progress in terms of breadth and detail. These documents prioritized prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, based on participation, gender mainstreaming, and leading by example principles. Importantly, the 2019 Action Plan allocated specific implementation duties and clearly addressed resources, demanding the inclusion of gender equality and WPS goals in EU external finance instruments, as well as money for gender advisers and training.

This was strengthened by the EU's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III, 2021-2025), which fully incorporates WPS commitments as a separate area of focus. GAP III maintained strong expectations, including at least 33% women's engagement in EU-supported peace processes and 85% of new external initiatives promoting gender equality by 2025 (Almqvist, 2021, p. 5). Such initiatives indicate a high level of policy coherence by connecting the WPS agenda to larger gender equality goals in development and foreign policy. They also provide institutional implementation procedures (for example, mandating gender training for personnel and assigning

gender advisers to EU embassies), which did not exist a decade before. To summarize, the EU has established a comprehensive policy framework and institutional machinery for WPS, supported by legislative and political commitments to gender equality in external operations. This framework demonstrates the EU's commitment to "leading by example" on WPS internationally.

These promises have produced some good results. Internally, there is evidence of incremental shift inside EU institutions: women's representation has steadily increased at the European External Action Service (EEAS), reaching approximately 48% by the end of 2019. EU leaders have established objectives for increasing women's representation in leadership positions (e.g., 40% by 2024), and new training and career development initiatives have been implemented to facilitate this (Almqvist, 2021, p. 6). Another important trend is the deployment of gender advisers and focal points in Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and EU delegations, which will help to make gender issues mainstream on the ground. At the policy level, WPS issues are increasingly being integrated in EU external programs. For example, since GAP III's implementation, EU delegates have been forced to include gender/WPS in their national plans, which has "stimulated more deliberate consideration of gender" (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, p. 1) in programming. The Civilian CSDP Compact (2018) and the 2022 Strategic Compass have improved WPS integration by providing guidelines and networks for gender advisers in missions. The EU has also bolstered its policies with financial projects aimed at WPS objectives. The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, which received €500 million from the EU, is a prime example of addressing violence against women and girls (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, p. 22). This one-of-a-kind program focuses on the Global South and demonstrates the EU's commitment to engage in WPS-related issues such as gender-based violence. Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate that the EU's WPS agenda is more than just words on paper; it has resulted in institutional changes, targeted money, and particular programs focused at empowering women and defending their rights in war and post-conflict circumstances.

Despite these strengths, considerable shortcomings and weaknesses remain in the EU's WPS implementation when policy effectiveness is examined. A key problem

has been converting the EU's broad policy into demonstrable, long-term benefits on the ground. Experts argue that for years, the EU's WPS documents were drafted in general terms and lacked clear practical paths. The 2008 Comprehensive Approach accepted WPS but lacked specifics on gender perspective, implementation, and accountability. This ambiguity hampered early implementation and was a feature of EU WPS policy for more than a decade (Almqvist, 2021, p. 7). For nearly a decade, EU WPS policy lacked clarity and hampered early implementation. Although the 2018-2019 Strategic Approach and Action Plan attempted to address this by assigning tasks, the accountability mechanisms for WPS remain rather weak. There is no permanent high-level enforcement body; rather, development is dependent on the cooperation of several EU institutions and member states. The lack of thorough monitoring and reporting has been seen as an issue; before 2019, even basic openness about CSDP missions on WPS was inadequate. As a result, the Council recognized the need for improved monitoring and supervision. In fact, in order to prevent WPS promises from slipping through the gaps of bureaucracy, experts have encouraged the EU to create stronger internal accountability systems (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022).

Institutional engagement and coordination are another area of weakness. Coherent implementation is difficult due to the EU's complexity, which includes the European Commission, EEAS, Council organizations, and 27 member states. Although WPS rules are generally supported by member states, EU-wide practical implementation has lagged. "Most EU Member States are like-minded and committed to the WPS Agenda, but practical implementation and buy-in of the WPS agenda is lacking at the EU level," (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022, p. 4) according to a 2022 civil society evaluation. To put it another way, WPS has not always been supported by high-level political bodies such as the Foreign Affairs Council and Political and Security Committee; instead, the agenda runs the risk of being limited to the field of development or human rights policy rather than being integrated into conversations about foreign and security policy. The coherence of the policy is compromised by this isolation. For instance, CSDP missions (managed by the Council and member states) and EU delegations (supervised by the Commission/EEAS) occasionally fail to successfully coordinate

their WPS activities. There is still “room for improvement… in coordination between delegations and CSDP missions” (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, p. 24) on gender and WPS issues, according to a recent study. Information-sharing and collaborative planning gaps result in missed chances to make use of the EU’s holistic strategy, which combines development, security, and diplomacy capabilities. Additionally, there is unequal implementation of CSDP operations: military operations, where “the military side is weak on gender expertise,” (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022, p. 4) have not made as much headway in integrating gender as civilian missions. This disparity points to uneven dedication across EU external action bodies.

The failure in the implementation of WPS does not only occur from the uneven dedication across EU bodies, but also politically driven imbalance in regional prioritization. For instance, the EU’s implementation of WPS in Russia-Ukraine War has been proactive and distinguishably visible, whereas it has been reactive and constrained in Gaza. The two scenarios differ significantly in terms of the breadth and depth of WPS implementation. WPS pledges were deeply implemented in Ukraine, as proven by the actual field-level initiatives under each pillar, ranging from GBV services and anti-trafficking operations to integrating women in security reforms. In Ukraine's crisis response, the EU has been a substantial financial donor in gender-focused projects. On the contrary, crisis response and WPS implementation in Gaza has been shallow, limited to the relief pillar of WPS agenda which only contains of humanitarian assistance (EU Humanitarian Support for Palestinians, n.d.).

While the response to Gaza war, which is a protracted case with a more politically sensitive profile, were only through humanitarian aid; Russia-Ukraine war, a major geopolitical threat for Europe, received a full-spectrum response that included WPS tactics. This example demonstrates how state-driven political goals and conventional security paradigms continue to have a significant impact on the WPS agenda’s actual implementation, even if the European Union has formally endorsed it. This demonstrates how realist security theory continues to dominate international politics, where national interests frequently take precedence over normative commitments and WPS principles, despite their formal adoption, are marginalized during emergencies.

Limitations in capacity and resources can cause problems. Given the EU's total development aid and the 85% gender-mainstreaming aim, financing for WPS is significant overall, however there are criticisms of the funding's quality and distribution. Only a small portion of the EU's gender-related money reaches women's organizations or peacebuilders in conflict areas; the majority is routed through large development initiatives. Civil society organizations run by women still "receive only a fraction of direct funding," (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022, p. 3) and what they do get is frequently funding for short-term projects that prioritize instant results over long-term support for sustainable growth. Smaller local NGOs find it challenging to obtain EU funding due to stringent finance requirements and administrative obstacles. As a result, local women's networks – actors that are essential to putting WPS into practice locally – continue without enough funding. WPS has limited personnel resources inside EU frameworks. Usually less experienced staff members holding multiple responsibilities, gender focal points in EU delegations "lack the resources and seniority to fully support GAP III" (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, p. 1) and the WPS agenda. Many lack specialized expertise in gender conflict issues. The institutional gender units at headquarters sometimes have fewer employees than their extensive scope. These capacity shortages make it more difficult for the EU to follow through on its WPS promises during emergencies or to guarantee that WPS concerns are regularly incorporated into programming. During intense crises, other objectives often take precedence over women's rights and the WPS agenda. Recent emergency responses have seen discussions on gender equality postponed or funds transferred, contradicting the promise that WPS is a priority during crisis, not only in times of peacefulness (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022, p. 3).

Lastly, it is challenging to evaluate the results of the EU's WPS initiatives in terms of actual advancements in women's security and involvement in conflict-affected areas; where data is available, it presents a cautious picture. Without a question, the EU has promoted WPS in international fora and included WPS terminology into several agreements and statements. However, it is still difficult to translate those normative achievements into "changes on the ground" (Olsson, 2024). Women continue to be

underrepresented in EU-sponsored peace processes and mediation initiatives, and the 33% goal has not been consistently reached. There is currently little proof that EU initiatives have had a major impact on gender dynamics in the conflict-affected nations where the EU works. For instance, in missions without operational funding or clear directives, gender advisory posts are sometimes ineffective. There have not been significant gains in key metrics that may be clearly linked to EU policy, such as the proportion of women at EU-supported peace negotiating tables or the prevalence of gender-based violence in EU participation regions. Furthermore, the EU's internal gender inequalities weaken the impact of its exterior lobbying, raising concerns about trustworthiness. A prevailing gender imbalance that is incompatible with WPS principles is highlighted by the fact that, as of 2019, women only accounted for 13% of senior management positions in the EEAS and are still underrepresented in key decision-making positions in security policy (Almqvist, 2021, p. 5). These facts "undermine the EU's credibility as a global leader on gender equality and damage the EU's image as a global gender actor" (Almqvist, 2021, p. 10). To put it another way, the EU's ability to encourage others to embrace the WPS agenda is diminished if it is not perceived as living up to its ideals.

In conclusion, from a policy effectiveness standpoint, the EU offers a duality of robust policy frameworks and institutional promises on the one hand, and chronic implementation shortcomings on the other. The EU's potential as a global leader in WPS is demonstrated by its strengths, which include a comprehensive WPS plan, targeted finance, and institutional progress. The limitations - ambiguous early policies, poor accountability, uneven coherence, limited support for local actors, and delayed actual development - demonstrate that the EU's WPS agenda has yet to completely deliver on its promises. The EU has created the framework and established credibility as one of the biggest advocates of WPS; but achieving concrete, long-term effects will need renewed implementation efforts, improved coordination, and persistent political commitment. Some of these flaws are made even more apparent, as the next section will demonstrate, by exploring the EU's strategy through a feminist perspective, which calls into question not just the policy' effectiveness but also their capacity to fundamentally challenge gendered power dynamics in defense and security policies.

5.2. Feminist Approaches Perspective: Strengths and Weaknesses

From a feminist standpoint, assessing the EU's WPS implementation entails determining how effectively its policies conform to the feminist ideals of equality, inclusion, and change. This viewpoint delves deeper into the nature of the EU's involvement with WPS, examining not just if regulations are in place or goals are reached, but also whether the strategy challenges patriarchal norms, empowers women as change agents, and reflects an intersectional view of security. According to this perspective, the EU's record has several noteworthy advantages, despite feminist academicians also strongly disagree with it. Although many applaud the EU for adopting the rhetoric of gender equality, others contend that the EU's strategy is still overly mechanical and bureaucratic and occasionally serves to uphold the same gender inequalities that WPS is intended to eliminate.

On the plus side, since that WPS originated from feminist activism at the UN and elsewhere, the EU's embrace of the WPS agenda may be seen as a feminist win in and of itself. The EU has included feminist ideals into important policy texts. In addition to supporting women's leadership and involvement, the 2018 Strategic Approach to WPS and GAP III (2020) both present an intersectional lens, recognizing the ways in which various oppressions (such as those based on sexual orientation, class, or race) interact with gender in conflict. As Haastrup points out, this was unusual for the EU; "nothing like it had come before," (Haastrup, 2021) underscoring the importance of the EU's stated commitment to intersectionality. Furthermore, a transformative approach was specifically called for in the European Parliament's 2020 Resolution on Gender Equality in EU Foreign and Security Policy, and a number of EU member states, including Sweden, France, Luxembourg and Spain, have declared "feminist foreign policies (FFP)" encouraging the EU as a whole to be more ambitious (European Parliament Resolution of 23 October 2020 on Gender Equality in EU's Foreign and Security Policy, 2020).

Sweden became the first country in the world to announce a feminist foreign policy (FFP) in 2014 – and later, the first to renounce it in 2022. Still, Sweden has been widely recognized as a pioneer in promoting a more balanced and gender-sensitive

approach to foreign policy and development. Although not sufficient, eight years of designing and executing a gender-sensitive security policy, and Sweden's FFP was the result of detailed exchanges between political leadership, MFA personnel, agencies, embassies, civil society, and the international community (Towns et al., 2023, p. 107). Following Sweden's pioneering initiative, numerous states have joined this WPS recognition and taken concrete action in their foreign policy. Canada introduced its "Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)" in 2017; France established its "feminist diplomacy" (diplomatie féministe); Mexico announced its FFP in 2020; and Spain published its Feminist Foreign Policy Guideline.

All of this suggests that feminist concepts are becoming increasingly accepted at the EU level and even crossing borders. Concrete measures focused on women's empowerment in peace and security have resulted from the incorporation of feminist ideology. For instance, feminists have long argued that peace processes must not exclude half of the population, which is why the EU supports networks of women mediators, funds initiatives to combat sexual violence (such as the Spotlight Initiative), and makes diplomatic efforts to include women's rights in peace talks. Indeed, the EU is viewed as a progressive force in several ways: its use of feminist discourse is an important progressive step, and it is arguably a leader in gender equality within the foreign policy arena. By providing room (at least verbally) for women and gender concerns in fields that have historically been dominated by males, these actions have bolstered inclusion and given the EU a role as a worldwide gender advocate.

Yet, feminist critiques frequently point out flaws in the conception and implementation of the EU's WPS agenda, notwithstanding these theoretical advantages. The idea that women's inclusion is promoted not only for the sake of gender justice or women's rights but also as means of other agendas (like enhancing operational effectiveness or resolving conflicts in the interests of the EU) is a common criticism of the WPS agenda. There is a larger pattern in international security where operations are justified by appropriating feminist discourse. The EU's certain verbal support for gender equality corresponds to a larger global tendency, according to which feminism is occasionally employed as a tool for pursuing security

objectives. For example, according to EU policy documents, engaging women would result in better outcomes or a more lasting peace. This assertion may be accurate, but it defines gender equality as a tool for resolving conflicts rather than as a normative need in and of itself. Doing so is warning that it runs the risk of seeing women as instruments of peace rather than as sentient beings with rights.

Additionally, concerns over a technical interpretation of WPS are present in the EU. Institutions that execute WPS in a bureaucratic, box-checking manner depoliticize the agenda and limit its capacity for a successful transformation. The EU is prone to this kind of approach because of its complicated bureaucracy, which creates action plans, indicators, and reporting criteria to make sure WPS is mentioned everywhere on paper—possibly without altering underlying patriarchal presumptions. There are instances of "box checking" behaviors in certain EU missions. For instance, designating a gender focal point fulfils the criteria to mainstream gender, but the focal point has no operational authority. Even when they seek to be gender-sensitive, institutionally oriented programs sometimes run the risk of becoming box-checking exercises rather than changing profoundly embedded structures (Seliga, 2023, p. 75). In EU settings, this box-checking exercise might take the form of gender training carried out in order to satisfy a mandate. However, decision-making still goes on as usual. When WPS becomes into a checklist, the feminist idea of transformation – that is, fundamentally changing power dynamics – tends to be lost. The narrow understanding of feminism that supports such activities diminishes its transformational potential and leads to incompatibility between what the EU says and what it really does.

The discursive framing of women in the EU's WPS agenda is the focus of a different branch of feminist criticism. Like UN Security Council resolutions, the EU frequently presents women in war as essentially victims in need of protection, despite lip paid to women's agency. According to security narratives, this locks women into a subservient position and reifies them as victims. The formal language used in policy documents and resolutions "largely sees women as victims of conflict, and the UNSCR and its member states' role as one of protection" (Thomson, 2019, p. 6). EU statements and programming frequently emphasize sexual violence, the suffering of

women and girls, and women's vulnerabilities. Of course, drawing attention to these issues is vital, but feminists argue that over-emphasis on women-as-victims can sideline women's agency and resilience. Nicole George and Laura Shepherd have noted that women in WPS discourse oscillate between being depicted as "perpetual victim" or "inherently peaceful", with both stereotypes limiting the roles women are imagined to have (Shepherd, 2016, p. 5). This might be seen, for example, in EU policy areas where women are primarily seen as recipients of aid or protection programs rather than as leaders or peace and security specialists.

One example is found in several EU humanitarian initiatives that reinforce a paternalistic narrative by primarily framing refugee women as mothers, wives or defenseless victims, often neglecting their agency and individuality (Rothenberger & Schmitt, 2024, p. 3927). By portraying males as guardians and problem-solvers and women in crisis areas as objects to be rescued, this framing subtly promotes patriarchal standards. Feminist scholars like as Cynthia Enloe and Hilary Charlesworth have criticized this relationship, claiming that protection narratives in WPS might twistedly reinforce men's dominance and women's subordination in the security domain (See in Chapter 2). In the EU context, if WPS implementation is solely focused on safeguarding women, there is a risk that it may reinforce rather than challenge the gendered hierarchy (protector/protected).

A feminist viewpoint ultimately asks if the EU's WPS strategy is about integrating women into existing systems or about genuinely transforming human society. Transformation would entail not just bringing women into peace negotiations or sending out female troops but also altering the way that peace and security are approached by emphasizing justice, inclusion, and compassion while undermining patriarchal and military ideologies. Critiques discussed in this chapter imply that rather than being radical, the EU's stance has so far been more conservative (or liberal feminist). According to postcolonial feminist scholars worry that the EU as a Global North player implements WPS in a way that still reflects global power inequalities and patriarchal beliefs (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023, p. 631). Current WPS practice is "part of a liberal peacebuilding framework that is racialized, patriarchal, classist, heteronormative, and Western-centric at its core," (Martin De

Almagro, 2018, p. 18) commented by feminist scholar María Martín de Almagro. This liberal feminist approach to WPS could fail to recognize the leadership and expertise of local women or the EU's own involvement in systemic abuse. From this perspective, WPS objectives run the risk of turning into a kind of neo-colonial governance that imposes foreign solutions.

The EU has acknowledged this divide informally, with recommendations to engage local women's organizations and avoid one-size-fits-all programming. In practice, however, local female peacemakers frequently struggle to be recognized in Brussels. As highlighted previously, interactions with local women are not yet systematic; EU policy debates still tend to place with Brussels-based civil society, and not with civil society actors impacted by conflicts (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022). According to feminist critics, the problem of who gets to speak and establish agendas is a feminist question. At the moment, EU institutions and authorities have most of the agenda-setting power, not the women in areas devastated by war and conflict that WPS is intended to assist. This is true even though the EU funds certain local programs.

Furthermore, the EU's larger foreign policy focus occasionally undermines its WPS initiatives from a feminist perspective. One such example is the EU's ongoing dependence on militaristic security policies. The feminist idea of WPS is not only to incorporate women into military, but to criticize militarism as a source of insecurity. In recent years, the EU has raised defense spending and implemented measures to improve military capabilities of member nations. The numbers show that %30 rise in EU member states' defense expenditure between 2021 and 2024 (EU Defence in Numbers, n.d.). Greater commitments to military forms of security normalize militarism, creating conditions that make gender equality less feasible (Haastrup, 2021). At its core, militarism is masculinist and hierarchical, perpetuating the protector/protected dichotomy and frequently intensifying violence. The EU may be supporting the exact patriarchal systems that feminists aim to change if it makes investments in hard security without making equally significant investments in conflict prevention and gender-sensitive peacebuilding. Also, EU policies only partially reflect the feminist view of human security, which prioritizes individual

well-being over state security. Critics point out that despite the EU's discourse becoming more human-centric over time, there is a lack of coherence in EU external action. The EU's migration policy, for instance, have come under fire for stereotyping refugee women and putting border security ahead of women's rights (Vella, 2024, p. 7). Such incoherence implies that the EU's adoption of feminist ideals is limited and conditional; a comprehensive reconsideration of policies that uphold inequality or insecurity would be necessary for a truly feminist transformation.

In conclusion, the feminist viewpoint shows that the EU's WPS approach's normative commitments and inclusion of gender equality terminology are its strongest points, but they are frequently compromised by practical flaws. Feminist concerns have been supported at the highest policy levels by the EU's major emphasis on WPS. The EU's strategy, according to feminist researchers, is still primarily reformist rather than revolutionary; it aims to enhance the system by incorporating women but falls short of fundamentally transforming it. As a result, the EU occasionally perpetuates patriarchal norms while attempting to challenge them. For example, it may portray itself as the strong actor protecting women or integrate women into institutions that are dominated by males without changing the institutional structures. What should have been a transformational program has become less political due to the instrumentalization of WPS, its technocratic execution (which prioritizes measurements over meaning), and victim-centric narratives.

Therefore, the EU's implementation of WPS has been essential but insufficient from a feminist perspective; while it has created opportunities for the discussion of women and gender in peace and security, it has not yet completely embraced the more profound feminist vision of inclusive and equitable peace. For the EU to truly succeed in this area, it would be necessary to not only involve women in the current peace and security procedures but also to reshape these around the values of justice, equality, and dignity for all, giving those who are fighting for peace at the grassroots level a voice. In the final debate, we addressed the open question of whether the EU can go in that direction.

5.3. Concluding Discussion

The feminist critique and the policy effectiveness analysis both highlight a contradiction at the core of the EU's involvement with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. On the one hand, the EU is a notable normative advocate for WPS, having created extensive policies, allocated funds, and consistently emphasized its dedication to promoting women's roles in peace and security. However, the results of these initiatives are inconsistent and may fall short of the agenda's revolutionary goals. The two viewpoints are summarized in this last debate, which also considers the lessons the EU's approach to WPS teaches us about its function as a global gender player.

In terms of policy, the EU has taken the lead in establishing the definition of WPS for a regional organization. By creating strategies like the EU Strategic Approach to WPS, establishing measurable goals, and integrating gender issues into external activity, it has probably done more to institutionalize the agenda than other regional organizations. The EU is becoming a major force in the global WPS arena because of these actions. The Union is frequently seen as a normative force that promotes gender equality and human rights internationally. The EU's goal to influence global norms in this area is demonstrated by its aspirations to "play a leading role as a gender equality catalyst" and "lead by example" in advancing WPS internationally. The EU's quasi-global actor position and the expectations that go along with it are demonstrated by the fact that it is assessed on its WPS implementation, just as a state would be. Furthermore, via its influence on partners policies, funding for civil society activism, and participation in United Nations fora, the EU has played a crucial role in preserving WPS on the global agenda. In many respects, the EU has accepted a position as a global gender player that stretches the boundaries of pledges to protect and include women in conflict situations.

Nonetheless, the substantial implementation gap between the EU's discourse and policies and the actuality of its activities is highlighted by both the effectiveness and feminist studies. This gap must be closed if the EU is to be seen as a worldwide leader on WPS. According to Jessica Almqvist, the EU must show that it is making

real progress in its own actions in implementing the WPS goals if it is to lead by example. Progress thus far has been partial. Practically speaking, the EU has a robust WPS framework, but its application has varied by region and crisis area. The EU is perceived as needing to do more to meet its own expectations. The EU's ability to fully implement its WPS agenda is hampered by a number of factors, including the persistence of male dominance in EU security institutions, the irregular integration of WPS into any relevant external policies, and the limited participation of local women in EU-led peace initiatives. Neither feminist scholars nor global actors overlook these shortcomings, which undermine its credibility. Women are still underrepresented at the highest levels of EU security decision-making, despite the EU's encouragement for nations all over the world to implement WPS National Action Plans and include women at the table. These inconsistencies imply that the EU's strategy may occasionally be more symbolic than revolutionary.

What does this indicate about the identity and function of the EU as a gender player on a global scale? First, it shows that the EU has adopted a cautiously progressive approach to gender in foreign policy, one that welcomes change and integrates feminist ideas to go beyond the status quo of international diplomacy but is cautious in that it rarely questions the underlying power structures that underpin its operations. To encourage "women's empowerment" in ways that complement its larger goals (development, stability, and good governance), the EU has successfully mainstreamed a liberal version of gender equality into its foreign relations. As was mentioned, this has produced significant policy results, and in that regard, the EU has benefited from the WPS agenda worldwide. However, the EU's strategy highlights the limitations of a top-down, technical execution of what is really a radical objective originating from feminist peace action. According to the WPS agenda, we must change the way we think about security by giving human security priority, redefining peace to include justice, and elevating the voices of those who are excluded. The EU's track record demonstrates reluctant progress toward these objectives. For example, although the EU has started to discuss dismantling patriarchal power structures in foreign policy discussions, it nevertheless frequently reproduces these structures in its domestic security and defense policies (for example, by using militaristic tactics that reinforce patriarchy). This disconnect suggests that the EU's

perception of itself as a champion of gender equality is a little ahead of reality; in other words, the EU is still working to balance its operational practice with its normative goals.

Second, the conflicts that arise when a "global gender actor" must strike a balance between feminist goals and other geopolitical factors are reflected in the EU's implementation of WPS. In contrast to a single country with a feminist foreign policy (like Sweden or Spain), the EU must combine the goals of several institutions and states. Feminist principles may clash with some of these agendas, such as immigration restriction, counterterrorism, and great power competition. The WPS agenda may become more fragmented or diluted as a result. A coherence issue is brought to light by the feminist criticism that the EU selectively chooses when and when to use a gender lens, embracing it in development initiatives but ignoring it in high-stakes security agreements.

Applying a uniform gender analysis to all external acts would be necessary for the EU to be a truly feminist global actor. Feminism in EU foreign policy is now isolated from other external relations activities including trade, migration, security and defense. If the EU hopes to achieve long-term results from its gender equality and WPS initiatives, it must overcome this isolation effect. It would involve, for example, ensuring that trade agreements have gender clauses, that crisis responses always integrate women's views, or that military deployments have objectives not only to stabilize but to empower local women. The EU is still developing in these areas, and growth has been uneven and gradual. When considering how the EU has handled WPS, it is evident that the agenda has forced the EU to face issues regarding its principles and standing throughout the world. In the field of peace and security, WPS serves as a yardstick for the EU's frequently asserted value-driven behavior. By supporting WPS, the EU identifies with a vision of global leadership that is founded on normative influence and principled action rather than just economic or military strength. Real self-reflection and progress are necessary to realize that objective. Both viewpoints conclude that bridging the gap between promise and reality is essential to the EU's legitimacy and efficacy as a promoter of women's rights and peace.

In conclusion, the EU has invested in women's leadership in conflict situations and has incorporated gender issues into the conversation about international security. This shows that the EU is working toward becoming, and in some ways already is, a major global gender actor. However, it also highlights the role's learning curve and limits. The EU's strategy has highlighted the significance of high-level commitment as well as the necessity of real change at every level of practice and policy. As it is, the EU may be characterized as a leader with limitations: a leader in establishing WPS standards and policies, but with limitations on their influence and execution. Going forward, the EU could firmly establish itself as a leader of a new type of global security leadership that promotes equality and inclusive peace as essential to international security if it can resolve its internal contradictions, fortify the connections between feminist ideals and practical measures, and genuinely collaborate with the women on the ground that WPS is intended to empower. In addition to strengthening the EU's reputation as a normative authority, such a development would, and perhaps more significantly, move the globe closer to the WPS agenda's transformational potential.

In the end, the interaction between feminist criticism and policy efficacy in assessing the EU's WPS initiatives emphasizes that success depends not only on the existence of policies but also on the level of change they generate. The EU's experience to date provides important lessons and ideas on how to integrate a feminist perspective into the challenging reality of peace and security work, both for the EU and other nations. It emphasizes that both the normative, people-centered dedication and the technical means necessary to maintain the agenda's original spirit are necessary for meaningful progress. As a result, the EU's position as a global gender player will keep changing, put to the test by every new crisis and influenced by the constant discussion between feminists and politicians. After 25 years, the WPS agenda continues to be a crucial platform for evaluating the EU's commitment to gender equality and its worldwide role in the years to come. In order to provide recommendations on how the EU may improve its WPS implementation going ahead, the study in this chapter has demonstrated the EU's current position, including both significant strengths and enduring shortcomings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda within the European Union (EU), with a particular focus on its strengths and weaknesses from policy effectiveness and feminist perspectives. The study was designed to go beyond state-centric and military-focused security conceptions and focus gender dynamics on the field of security by placing research within the context of Feminist Security Studies (FSS). Through a lens of FSS, gender equality is emphasized as one of the crucial components of lasting peace. WPS Agenda establishes the most comprehensive and wide-ranging policy framework for states to acknowledge women's experiences in crisis and war settings as well as the agency of women in peace-building processes. However, any agenda can only be effective through successful implementation and proper monitoring. As this study has shown, while the EU has adopted a progressive normative framework and positioned itself as a global advocate for gender equality in peace and security, significant challenges remain in translating this ambition into consistent and transformative practice.

The key finding of this thesis is that there is a substantial and structural gap between the EU's institutional commitment to WPS and the reality of its actual implementation. The EU's moral commitment to be a global WPS advocate and the prevailing impact of political pragmatism and geopolitical interests that determines its external actions, are at the center of this contradiction. From a policy effectiveness perspective, the EU's WPS framework suffers from fragmented implementation. Despite high-level commitments articulated in strategic documents such as the Strategic Approach to WPS and GAP III, the outcomes remain fragmented and inconsistent. The varied quality, insufficient localization of Country-Level

Implementation Plans (CLIPs) and impact of implementation tools reveal a significant lack of consistent institutional ownership and allocated resources. These inconsistencies stem from differences in member state priorities, varying institutional capabilities, and the EU's limited enforcement authority over external action of its member states. Furthermore, the instrumental use of outsourced consultants, as well as a lack of ownership among EU delegations, jeopardize long-term viability and local relevance. The EU's ability to maintain cohesion and accountability across its institutions and missions remains inadequate, undermining its transformational power.

Additionally, a comparison of EU's responses to the Russian-Ukraine War and Gaza, demonstrates that the practical application of WPS is frequently selective and instrumental. While the EU have been implemented the full spectrum of WPS response in Ukraine, a humanitarian aid focused approach has been shown in Gaza. This simply proves that no matter how the EU is a global WPS advocate, it can easily be subordinated to traditional security priorities and contemporary geopolitical interests. Weak institutional coordination, as well as the lack of adequate top-down accountability systems, contribute to the persistence of this fragmentation.

The EU's engagement with WPS has drawn criticism from feminists for being more performative than transformative. Even though official discourse is increasingly using feminist terminology, structural power dynamics are still mostly unchallenged. The agenda often reduces women's participation to numerical inclusion rather than empowering them as agents of structural change. WPS is typically presented as an instrument to promote operational effectiveness, stability, and EU legitimacy, rather than a binding normative responsibility for gender equality and peacebuilding. Furthermore, the EU's WPS practices have demonstrated a lack of intersectionality awareness, frequently failing to address how gender inequality intersects with race, class, and migration status. For example, the securitization of EU migration policy promotes stereotypes and puts border control ahead of refugee women's agency and rights.

Furthermore, rather than demonstrating a dedication to feminist peacebuilding, collaboration with global institutions such as NATO is a calculated exploitation of

the WPS agenda to bolster institutional credibility. This pragmatic approach runs the danger of weakening the agenda's transformational potential and depoliticizing it. In addition, the EU's external advocacy of gender equality occasionally collides with member state internal incoherence and a lack of political will, exposing a disconnect between rhetoric and action. Vitally, an essential theoretical conflict is shown by the EU's concurrent promotion of WPS with higher defense spending and stronger ties with military organizations, such as NATO. The thesis concludes that rather than really challenging the militarized international security, the EU is internalizing the WPS agenda in order to improve the acceptance of its security measures.

In conclusion, even though the EU has taken significant steps in institutionalizing the WPS agenda, there is now a conflict between political pragmatism and normative ambition in its current implementation. A dual commitment is necessary for the WPS agenda to fully realize its transformative potential in the EU context: first, to strengthen institutional mechanisms and guarantee consistent, context-sensitive implementation; and second, to adopt a more profound feminist vision that actively challenges the justifications and structures that underlie gendered insecurity. The EU can only go beyond normative leadership and make a significant contribution to a more equitable and inclusive international peace and security system by making such a promise.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi tarafından alınan kararlar doğrultusunda şekillenen Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündeminin Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) dış eylemleri bağlamında nasıl uygulandığını, feminist güvenlik çalışmaları perspektifinden incelemektedir. Tezin temel amacı, AB'nin "normatif güç" kimliği çerçevesinde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini ne ölçüde dönüştürücü bir biçimde hayata geçirdiğini analiz etmektir. Tez, AB'nin bu gündemi dış politika ve güvenlik politikalarına nasıl entegre ettiğini; özellikle kurumsal stratejiler, eylem planları ve uygulama mekanizmaları aracılığıyla nasıl hayata geçirdiğini araştırır. Nitel söylem ve içerik analizi yöntemleriyle AB raporları, BM belgeleri, akademik araştırma ve çeşitli düşünce kuruluşlarının raporlarını inceleyen bu tez, inşacı ve feminist epistemolojiler üzerine kuruludur. Bu bağlamda iki temel araştırma sorusu yöneltilmiştir: AB Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini nasıl uygulamaktadır? Ve bu uygulama hem politika etkinliği hem de feminist bakış açısından hangi güçlü ve zayıf yönleri barındırmaktadır? Bulgular, AB'nin söylem düzeyinde güçlü bir toplumsal cinsiyet duyarlılığı geliştirdiğini ve Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündeminin en büyük savunucularından biri olduğunu gösteriyor. Ancak, uygulamada bu söylemin sıklıkla araçsallaştırıldığını ve derin bir kurumsal dönüşümün gerçekleşmesi adına yeterli aksiyonların alınmadığını göstermektedir.

Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemi Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi'nin (BMGK) 1325 sayılı kararı ile 2000 yılında kabul edilmesi, kadınların barış ve güvenlik süreçlerindeki rollerinin uluslararası düzeyde tanınmasında bir dönüm noktası olmuştur. Çeşitli Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) raporları ve uluslararası istatistikler, kadın ve çocukların herhangi bir savaş veya kriz anında erkeklere göre daha orantısız bir şekilde etkilendiğini ortaya koymuştur (Report of the Secretary-

General on Women, Peace and Security, 2023). Bununla birlikte, askerler tarafından bir savaş silahı olarak kullanılan kadınlar ve kızlar, uzun zamandır cinsel ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı şiddetin hedefi olmuştur. Savaş zamanında kadınlara yönelik cinsel istismar ve tecavüz, kadınların güvenliğini ciddi şekilde tehdit eden bir silah ve bir tür eğlence olarak kurumsallaşmıştır. Bu bulgular, barış ortamlarındaki toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin savaş ve kriz ortamlarına yansıyan boyutlarını ele almak adına önemli bir eylem çağrısında bulundu. Savaş zamanında tecavüzü dikkatsiz davranış olarak değil, kolektif bir güvenlik sorunu olarak ele almak mümkün oldu. Bununla birlikte, kadınların barış inşa süreçleri ve güvenlik politika yapıcılara dâhil edilmesi Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündeminin en kilit hedeflerinden biridir.

Tezin kavramsal çerçevesinin anlatıldığı ikinci bölüm, güvenlik kavramının dönüşümünü ve feminist yaklaşımların bu dönüşüme katkısını açıklar. Geleneksel güvenlik çalışmaları uzun süre devlet merkezli ve askeri tehdit odaklı olmuştur. Buna karşılık Eleştirel Güvenlik Çalışmaları, güvenliği yalnızca devletlerin değil, bireylerin, toplumların ve insanlığın da güvenliği olarak yeniden tanımlar. Barry Buzan, Ken Booth ve Wyn Jones gibi yazarların çalışmaları temel alınarak güvenliğin genişletilmesi (broadening) ve derinleştirilmesi (deepening) süreci incelenir (Booth, 1991; Buzan, 1983; Wyn Jones, 1999). Eleştirel Güvenlik Çalışmaları, “Kimin için güvenlik?” ve “Neye karşı güvenlik?” sorularını merkeze alarak güvenliği insani, çevresel, ekonomik ve toplumsal boyutlarıyla ele alır. Bunu yaparken, geleneksel güvenlik çalışmalarının benimsediği pozitivist düşünce akımının aksine, araştırmacı (özne) ile incelenen olgu (nesne) arasında belirgin bir ayrım olmadığını savunur (C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006, s. 473). Güvenlik kaçınılmaz olarak tarihsel, kültürel ve politik koşullardan etkilendiği için, araştırmacının güvenlik konusu incelenirken bu olgudan ayrı tutulmasının pratik olmadığı kadar indirgeyici olduğunu vurgular.

Bu kuramsal dönüşümün devamı olarak Feminist Güvenlik Çalışmaları ortaya çıkar. Feminist yaklaşım, güvenliğin toplumsal cinsiyetle kurulan güç ilişkilerinden bağımsız olamayacağını savunur. J. Ann Tickner ve Cynthia Enloe gibi feminist teorisyenler, geleneksel güvenlik anlayışının erkek-merkezli yapısını eleştirerek,

kadınların görünmez kılınan deneyimlerini merkeze alır. Enloe'nun "feminist merak" (feminist curiosity) kavramı (Enloe, 2004), kadınların gündelik yaşamlarının ve savaş-barış süreçlerindeki rollerinin politik analizin konusu olması gerektiğini vurgular. Feminist Güvenlik Çalışmaları, "barış" ve "savaş" ikiliğini sorgular; barış dönemlerinde dahi süregelen yapısal ve sembolik şiddet biçimlerini güvenliğin bir parçası olarak değerlendirir. Kadınlara yönelik şiddet ve cinsel istismar, ekonomik dışlanma veya siyasal temsil eksikliği bu genişletilmiş güvenlik anlayışının merkezindedir. Bu bölümde feminist güvenlik perspektifi, sadece kadınların korunmasını değil, aynı zamanda ataerkil yapıların dönüştürülmesini hedefleyen bir özgürleşme projesi olarak tanımlanır.

Üçüncü bölüm, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündeminin tarihsel gelişimini ve normatif dayanaklarını inceler. Bu gelişim süreci, CEDAW (1979) ve Pekin Eylem Platformu (1995) gibi belgelerle başlayan kadın hakları mücadelesinin, BMGK 1325 sayılı kararı ile güvenlik alanına taşınmasıyla kurumsallaşmıştır. Ulusötesi feminist ağlar ve sivil toplum kuruluşları (STK) tarafından organize edilen küresel savunuculuk çabaları, BMGK 1325 sayılı kararın temellerinin atılmasında öncülük etti. Mayıs 2000'de, New York'taki çeşitli kadın hakları ve barış örgütleri, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik STK Çalışma Grubu'nu kurdu. Bu koalisyon, kadınların tüm barış inşa faaliyetlerine eşit ve tam katılımını açıkça savunan 14 STK'yı bir araya getirerek kadınların dâhil edilmesi ve korunması için somut öneriler içeren ve sonunda BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nin 1325 sayılı kararı haline gelecek olan ilk taslağı hazırladı (Cohn ve ark., 2004). Kadınların barış süreçlerine katılımı, korunması ve güçlenmesi bu kararın dört temel sütununu oluşturur: önleme (prevention), katılım (participation), koruma (protection) ve iyileşme/yeniden yapılanma (relief & recovery).

1325 sayılı kararın ardından kabul edilen 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 gibi diğer kararlar, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini genişletmiş ve izleme göstergeleri oluşturmuştur. Ancak feminist literatürde bu kararların kadınları çoğu zaman "barışın öznesi" değil "korunması gereken mağdurlar" (Rothenberger & Schmitt, 2024, s. 3927) olarak sunduğu eleştirisi yapılır. Bu eleştiriler, gündemin kurumsal feminizm düzeyinde başarı kazansa da, derin toplumsal dönüşümü tam

anlamıyla sağlayamadığını ileri sürer. Ayrıca feminist kurumsalcılık yaklaşımı kullanılarak, kurumların yalnızca resmi kurallar değil, aynı zamanda gayri resmî normlar ve toplumsal kodlarla işlediği belirtilir (Mackay & Murtagh, 2019, s. 11). Bu nedenle, kadınların temsilinin niceliksel artışı tek başına yeterli değildir; kurumların işleyiş mantığının da dönüşmesi gerekir. Dolayısıyla feministler, kadınların dâhil edilmesinin sembolik olmaktan çıkarılıp dönüştürücü bir düzeye taşınması gerektiğini savunur.

AB, kendisini küresel düzeyde normatif bir güç olarak tanımlamakta ve dış politikada toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini teşvik ettiğini iddia etmektedir. Ancak, feminist bakış açısı çerçevesinde AB'nin üstlendiği toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği savunuculuğu ve Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemi destekçisi rolünü hangi düzeyde yerine getirdiğini incelemek gerekmektedir. Tezin merkezini oluşturan dördüncü bölümde AB'nin bu rollerin gerekliliği olarak hangi yöntemleri uyguladığı ve kararlar aldığı incelenmektedir.

AB Konseyi'nin 2008 tarihli 1325 ve 1820 sayılı kararların uygulanmasına ilişkin kapsamlı yaklaşımı, 2018 tarihli Stratejik Yaklaşım ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eylem Planları (GAP), gündemin AB politikalarına entegrasyonunda temel araçlardır. Zaman içinde AB, gündemi uygulamak ve süreci ilerletmek için özel eylem planları ve yapılar benimsemiştir. Örneğin, AB'nin birinci ve ikinci Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eylem Planları (GAP I 2010-2015 ve GAP II 2016-2020), kadınları ve kız çocuklarını şiddetten korumaya ve kadınların barış inşasına katılımını artırmaya yönelik taahhütlerini yinelemiştir. Özellikle GAP III (2021–2025), toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve kadınların güçlenmesini beş eksen üzerinden ele alır: yönetişim, ortaklıklar, kurumsal kapasite, toplumsal dönüşüm ve hesap verebilirlik. Ancak, GAP III'ün uygulamasının üye ülkeler arasında eşitsiz olduğunu, bazı ülkelerin Ülke Düzeyinde Uygulama Planları (CLIPs) aracılığıyla daha etkili adımlar atarken, bazıları ise bu planları biçimsel düzeyde tutuyor.

Buna ek olarak, bazı üye ülkeler feminist dış politikayı benimsemiş olsa da, çeşitli ulusal gündemler ve yetersiz hesap verebilirlik sistemleri kolektif eylemi engelliyor. Ayrıca, sivil toplumun önde gelen aktörleri ve feminist akademisyenler, AB'nin

Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemi yaklaşımının toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine yönelik dönüştürücü bir taahhüdü mü, yoksa önceden var olan politika hedeflerini ilerletmek için toplumsal cinsiyetin stratejik bir araç olarak kullanılması mı olduğunu giderek daha fazla sorguluyorlar. AB'nin dış ilişkilerinde gündemi teşvik etme biçimi, sıklıkla yumuşak güç stratejisi çerçevesinde kurgulanmaktadır. Barışı koruma operasyonlarında, kalkınma yardımlarında veya üçüncü ülkelerle ortaklıklarda toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin "ihracı", AB'nin kimlik inşasının bir parçası olarak konumlanmıştır (MacKellar ve ark., 2023, s. 15). Bununla birlikte, tez bu yaklaşımı "araçsallaştırılmış feminizm" olarak tanımlar; zira AB'nin toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları çoğu zaman kalkınma veya güvenlik çıkarlarına hizmet eden birer araç olarak kullanılmaktadır.

Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemi AB tarafından güçlü bir şekilde desteklenmesine rağmen, bu normların benimsenmesi BM Güvenlik Konseyi üyeleri arasında bile eşit olmamıştır. Bu farklılıkları anlamak, gündemin uluslararası bağlamdaki tutarlılığını ve zorluklarını değerlendirmek için çok önemlidir. Hem Çin hem de Rusya, resmi olarak Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini desteklemelerine rağmen, son zamanlarda bu BM normlarının genişletilmesi konusunda tereddütlerini dile getirmişlerdir. BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nin iki daimi üyesi (P5), sıklıkla ulusal çözümlere boyun eğmekte ve güçlü hesap verebilirlik terminolojisine karşı çıkmaktadır, bu da zaman zaman WPS metinleriyle uyumsuz oylama ve söylemlere yol açmaktadır. Bu farklı yaklaşımlar, gündemin normlarının uluslararası arenada tartışmalı olduğunu göstermektedir. Rusya, gündemi egemenlik ilkesi açısından temkinli karşılamakta, toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını Batı'nın değerlerini dayatması olarak görmektedir. Çin ise gündemi resmî söyleminde desteklese de, uygulamada "kalkınma merkezli" bir yaklaşımla sınırlandırmaktadır. Bu tartışmalar, çok taraflı yönetişimin gelecekteki yapısı konusunda yeni bir "rekabet alanı"na (McInnis ve ark., 2024, s. 5) dönüşmektedir. BMGK daimi üyelerinin gündeme yönelik bakış açılarının karşılaştırılması, AB'nin kendini normatif lider olarak tanımlamasına karşın küresel düzeyde egemen bir feminist dönüşüm yaratamadığını göstermektedir.

Tüm bu incelemeler ekseninde tezin beşinci bölümünde, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündeminin AB tarafından uygulanmasını iki çerçevede değerlendirilmektedir.

Politika etkinliği perspektifinden bakıldığında, AB gündemi uygulamak için güçlü bir altyapı oluşturmuştur, ancak sonuçlar değişkenlik göstermektedir. Feminist bir bakış açısıyla güçlü ve zayıf yönler araştırıldığında ise, AB'nin gündemi uygulamasını değerlendirmek, politikalarının eşitlik, kapsayıcılık ve ataerkil dinamiklerde bir dönüşüm gibi feminist ideallere ne kadar etkili bir şekilde uyduğunu belirlemeyi gerektirir. Bulguları değerlendirmek için bu iki bakış açısının tercih edilmesi, AB'nin gündeme yönelik kurumsal taahhüdü ile bunun fiili uygulamasının gerçekliği arasındaki önemli ve yapısal bir uçurum olduğu temel varsayımını test etmeyi mümkün kılmaktadır.

Politika etkinliği açısından AB, gündem ilkelerini strateji belgelerine dâhil etme, finansman mekanizmaları oluşturma ve üye devletlerarası koordinasyonu sağlama konusunda ilerleme kaydetmiştir ve güçlü bir altyapı oluşturmuştur. AB, gündemin yürütülmesine yönelik çeşitli girişimler, eylem planları ve araçlar uygulamıştır. 2008 yılında yayınlanan AB'nin BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nin 1325 ve 1820 sayılı kararlarının uygulanmasına yönelik Kapsamlı Yaklaşım, AB'nin gündemin standartlarını dış eylemlerine dâhil etme niyetini vurgulamıştır. Takip eden yıllarda, politika çerçevesi önemli ölçüde gelişmiştir. Avrupa Birliği Konseyi'nin gündeme ilişkin AB Stratejik Yaklaşımı (2018) ve AB Eylem Planı (2019-2024), kapsam ve ayrıntı açısından önemli ilerlemeler kaydetmiştir. Bu belgeler, katılım, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin anaakımlaştırılması ve örnek teşkil etme ilkelerine dayalı olarak önleme, koruma, yardım ve iyileştirme konularına öncelik vermiştir. Önemli olarak, 2019 Eylem Planı belirli uygulama görevleri tahsis etmiş ve kaynakları açıkça ele almış, AB dış finansman araçlarına toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve gündemin hedeflerinin dâhil edilmesini ve toplumsal cinsiyet danışmanları ve eğitim için fon ayrılmasını talep etmiştir.

Bu vaatler bazı olumlu sonuçlar doğurmuştur. AB kurumları içinde kademeli bir değişim olduğu görülmektedir. Avrupa Dış Eylem Servisi'nde (EEAS) kadınların temsili giderek artmış ve 2019 sonu itibarıyla yaklaşık %48'e ulaşmıştır. AB liderleri, liderlik pozisyonlarında kadınların temsilini artırmak için hedefler belirlemiş (örneğin, 2024 yılına kadar %40) ve bunu kolaylaştırmak için yeni eğitim ve kariyer geliştirme girişimleri uygulamaya koymuştur (Almqvist, 2021, s. 6). Bir diğer önemli

girişim ise, Avrupa Birliği'nin Ortak Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikası (CSDP) görevlerinde ve AB delegasyonlarında toplumsal cinsiyet danışmanları ve sorumlu personel görevlendirilmesidir. Bu, toplumsal cinsiyet sorunlarının sahada ana akım haline gelmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Politika düzeyinde, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik konuları AB dış eylemlerine giderek daha fazla dâhil edilmektedir. Örneğin, GAP III'ün uygulanmasından bu yana, AB delegasyonları ulusal planlarına toplumsal cinsiyet ve Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik değerlerini katmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Bu da saha programlamasında toplumsal cinsiyetin daha bilinçli bir şekilde ele alınmasına yol açmıştır (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, s. 1). AB ayrıca, gündemin hedeflerine yönelik geliştirilen projelere finansal destek sağlayarak politikalarını güçlendirmiştir. AB'den 500 milyon avro değerinde finansal destek alan AB ve BM ortaklığındaki "Spotlight Girişimi", kadınlara ve kız çocuklarına yönelik şiddeti sona erdirmeyi amaçlayan iyi bir örnektir (Salzinger & Desmidt, 2023, s. 22).

Ancak politika döngüsünün izleme ve hesap verebilirlik aşamalarında ciddi eksiklikler bulunmaktadır. Üye devletlerin birbirinden farklılaşan uygulama yöntemleri, ortak göstergelerin eksikliği ve sahadaki toplumsal cinsiyet bakış açısından uzak pratikler, politika etkinliğini sınırlamaktadır. Ayrıca AB'nin Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik politikaları çoğu zaman güvenlikten ziyade kalkınma araçlarıyla ilişkilendirildiğinden, gündemin "barış ve güvenlik" boyutu zayıflamaktadır. AB'nin 2018-2019 Stratejik Yaklaşım ve Eylem Planı, görevler atayarak bu sorunu çözmeye çalışsa da; Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik konuları için hesap verebilirlik mekanizmaları oldukça zayıf kalmaktadır. Bunun en büyük nedeni ise; kalıcı bir üst düzey uygulama organının bulunmaması ve bunun yerine, gelişmenin birkaç AB kurumu ve üye devletin iş birliğine bağlı olmasıdır. Kapsamlı izleme ve değerlendirme raporlamanın eksikliğinin bir sorun olarak görülmesinin yanında 2019'dan önce, gündem ile ilgili CSDP görevleri hakkında temel düzeyde şeffaflık bile yetersizdi. Sonuç olarak, Avrupa Birliği Konseyi izleme ve değerlendirme denetiminin iyileştirilmesi gerektiğini kabul etmiştir ve gündemin vaatlerinin bürokrasinin boşluklarında kaybolmasını önlemek için daha güçlü hesap verebilirlik sistemleri oluşturmaya teşvik etmiştir (EU Approach to Women, Peace and Security: Lessons Identified and Way Forward, 2022).

Gündemin uygulanmasındaki başarısızlık, yalnızca AB kurumları arasında eşit olmayan adanmışlıktan değil, aynı zamanda jeopolitik çıkarlardaki farklı öncelikler nedeniyle oluşan dengesizlikten de kaynaklanmaktadır. Örneğin, AB'nin Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nda gündemi uygulaması belirgin bir şekilde etkinliğini gösterirken, Gazze'de reaktif ve kısıtlı olmuştur. İki senaryo, gündemin uygulanmasının kapsamı ve yeterliliği açısından önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir. Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik taahhütleri Ukrayna'da derinlemesine uygulanmıştır. Bu, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı şiddet hizmetleri ve insan kaçakçılığıyla mücadele operasyonlarından kadınların güvenlik reformlarına entegre edilmesine kadar her bir sütun altında sahada gerçekleştirilen fiili girişimlerle kanıtlanmıştır. AB, Ukrayna'daki krize yanıt çabaları kapsamında toplumsal cinsiyet odaklı projelerde önemli bir finansör olmuştur. Öte yandan, Gazze'deki krize yanıt ve gündemin uygulanması yetersiz kalmıştır. Siyasi açıdan daha hassas ve uzun süren Gazze savaşına yanıt sadece insani yardımla sınırlı kalırken, Avrupa için büyük bir jeopolitik tehdit oluşturan Rusya-Ukrayna savaşına Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik taktikleri de dâhil olmak üzere tam kapsamlı bir yanıt verildi. Bu örnek, Avrupa Birliği'nin resmi olarak onaylamasına rağmen, devlet odaklı siyasi hedeflerin ve geleneksel güvenlik paradigmalarının gündemin fiili uygulaması üzerinde nasıl önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Realist güvenlik teorisinin uluslararası siyaseti nasıl etkisi altına almaya devam ettiğini de gözler önüne serer.

Feminist bir bakış açısıyla, AB'nin gündem uygulamasını değerlendirmek, politikalarının eşitlik, kapsayıcılık ve patriarkal sistemleri dönüştürme kapasitesi gibi feminist ideallere ne kadar etkili bir şekilde uyduğunu belirlemeyi gerektirir. Bu bakış açısı, AB'nin Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik ile olan ilişkisini daha derinlemesine inceler. Sadece politika düzenlemelerinin olup olmadığını veya hedeflere ulaşılıp ulaşılmadığını değil, aynı zamanda stratejinin ataerkil normlara meydan okuyup okumadığını, kadınları bu dönüşümün önemli aktörleri olarak destekleyip desteklemediğini ve güvenlik konusunda kesişimsel bir bakış açısını yansıtıp yansıtmadığını da inceler. Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik Gündemi, hem BM'nin bünyesinde hem de diğer yerlerdeki feminist aktivizmden doğduğu için, AB'nin gündemi benimsemesi başlı başına bir feminist zafer olarak görülebilir (Haastrup, 2021). Eksik tarafları olduğunu kabul etmekle birlikte, AB feminist idealleri önemli

politika metinlerine dâhil etmiştir. Kadınların liderliğini ve katılımını desteklemenin yanı sıra, kesişimsel bir bakış açısı sunarak, cinsel yönelim, sınıf veya ırk temelli çeşitli baskıların savaş ve kriz ortamlarında toplumsal cinsiyetle nasıl etkileşime girdiğini kabul etmektedir.

Ayrıca, Avrupa Parlamentosu'nun 2020 tarihli AB Ortak Dışişleri ve Güvenlik Politikasında Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Kararı'nda dönüştürücü bir yaklaşım özellikle talep edilmiş ve İsveç, Fransa, Lüksemburg ve İspanya dâhil olmak üzere bir dizi AB üye ülkesi, AB'nin bir bütün olarak daha iddialı olmasını teşvik eden "feminist dış politikalar" ilan etmiştir. İsveç, 2014 yılında dünyada feminist dış politika ilan eden ilk ülke oldu ve daha sonra, 2022 yılında bunu terk eden ilk ülke oldu. Bunun bir geriye dönüş olduğu gözden kaçmamalıdır. Fakat İsveç'in öncü girişiminin ardından çok sayıda devlet feminist dış politikaya geçiş konusunda somut adımlar atmıştır. Tüm bunlar, feminist kavramların AB düzeyinde kabul gördüğünü ve hatta sınırları aştığını göstermektedir. Barış ve güvenlik alanında kadınların güçlenmesine odaklanan somut adımlar, feminist ideolojinin benimsenmesinin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Örneğin, feministler uzun zamandır barış süreçlerinde nüfusun yarısına tekabül eden kadınların dışlamaması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu nedenle AB, kadın arabulucular ağlarını desteklemekte, cinsel şiddete karşı mücadele girişimlerini finanse etmekte ve barış görüşmelerine kadın haklarının dâhil edilmesi için diplomatik çabalar göstermektedir.

Tarihsel olarak erkeklerin hâkim olduğu alanlarda kadınlara ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin getirdiği eşitsizliğe en azından söylemde yer vererek, AB'nin eylemlerinin kapsayıcılığını güçlendirmiştir. Bununla birlikte, feminist eleştiriler, bu olumlu taraflara rağmen, AB'nin gündemin tasarlanması ve uygulanmasındaki eksikliklere sık sık dikkat çekmektedir. Kadınların barış ve güvenlik süreçlerine katılımının artırılması sadece toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği veya kadın hakları için değil, aynı zamanda AB'nin uluslararası siyasette etkinliğini artırması veya çatışmaların AB çıkarları doğrultusunda çözülmesi için bir araç olarak kullanıldığı, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemine yönelik yaygın bir eleştiri konusudur. Uluslararası güvenlik alanında, operasyonların feminist söylemleri kullanarak meşrulaştırıldığı eleştirisi yaygındır. Örneğin, AB politika belgelerine göre, kadınların katılımı daha iyi

sonuçlar veya daha kalıcı bir barışa yol açacaktır. Bu iddia doğru olabilir, ancak toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini kendi başına normatif bir ihtiyaç olarak değil, çatışmaları çözmek için bir araç olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu, kadınları hakları olan duyarlı varlıklar olarak değil, barışın araçları olarak görme riskini doğurmaktadır.

Ek olarak, Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini bürokratik, formalite icabı bir şekilde uygulayan kurumlar, gündemi politik olmaktan çıkarmakta ve başarılı bir dönüşüm için gerekli kapasiteyi sınırlamaktadır. AB'nin karmaşık bürokrasisi nedeniyle bu tür bir yaklaşıma eğilimi vardır. Bürokrasi, gündemin kâğıt üzerinde her yerde bahsedilmesini sağlamak için eylem planları, göstergeler ve raporlama ölçütleri oluşturur; ancak bu, altta yatan patriarkal yapıyı dönüştürmek için yeterli değildir. Bazı AB görevlerinde, yapılması gerekenler listesinde tamamlanan hedeflerin üstünü çizme davranışlarına rastlanmaktadır. Örneğin, bir toplumsal cinsiyet konusunda sorumlu kişi belirlemek, toplumsal cinsiyeti anaakımlaştırma ölçütünü yerine getirir, ancak bu kişi işletme yetkisine sahip değildir. Dolayısıyla, feminist perspektiften bakıldığında AB'nin yaklaşımı dönüştürücü olmaktan ziyade teknik ve yönetsel bir karakter taşır. Kadınların barış süreçlerine katılımı çoğunlukla niceliksel hedeflere indirgenmiş, patriarkal yapılar sorgulanmamıştır (Seliga, 2023, s. 75). Kadınların sadece masada bulunması, karar alma süreçlerinin cinsiyetçi doğasını değiştirmemektedir. Bu bağlamda AB'nin gündemin uygulamasını "liberal feminizmle sınırlı" olduğu söylenebilir; çünkü eşitlik hedefi daha çok fırsat eşitliği düzeyinde kalmakta, yapısal dönüşüm hedeflenmemektedir. Bu analizler, AB'nin normatif güç olarak kendi söylemini güçlendirdiğini ancak feminist güvenlik politikaları yaratma iddiasında başarısız olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Feminist güvenlik çalışmalarına göre, gerçek güvenlik yalnızca kadınların görünür kılınmasıyla değil, kurumsal ataerkil yapının dönüştürülmesiyle mümkündür.

Sonuç olarak, AB'nin Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini uygulanmasında normatif söylem ile pratik uygulama arasında belirgin bir boşluk olduğu ortadadır. AB, kendisini toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini destekleyen küresel bir savunucu olarak konumlandırsa da, uygulama düzeyinde politika belgeleri ile sahadaki gerçeklikler arasındaki tutarsızlıklar bu rolü zayıflatmaktadır. Bunun en büyük sebeplerinden biri hesap verebilirlik mekanizmalarının işlevsiz olması, somut gösterge ve bağımsız

değerlendirme yöntemlerinin eksik kalmasıdır. AB Kadın, Barış ve Güvenlik gündemini kurumsallaştırma konusunda önemli adımlar atmış olsa da, şu anda gündemin uygulanmasında siyasi pragmatizm ile normatif hedefler arasında bir çelişki bulunmaktadır. Gündemin AB bağlamında dönüştürücü potansiyelini tam olarak gerçekleştirebilmesi için ikili bir taahhüt gereklidir: ilk olarak, kurumsal mekanizmaları güçlendirmek ve tutarlı, bağlama duyarlı bir uygulamayı garanti etmek; ikinci olarak, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı oluşan güvensizliklerin altında yatan gerekçeleri ve yapıları aktif olarak sorgulayan daha derin bir feminist yaklaşım benimsemek. Gündemin temel hedeflerinin yerine getirilmesi için mutlaka patriarkal yapıya meydan okunmalıdır. Kadınların barış ve güvenlik süreçlerine katılımının artırılmasına sadece sayısal bir artış olarak bakmanın yanı sıra kurumsal bir dönüşüme gidecek feminist politikalar benimsenmelidir. AB, ancak böyle bir taahhütte bulunarak normatif liderliğin ötesine geçebilir ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini dış politikada kullanılan bir araç olmaktan öteye taşıyabilir. Dolayısıyla, değer temelli bir yaklaşım ile hareket ederse daha eşitlikçi ve kapsayıcı bir uluslararası barış ve güvenlik sistemine önemli bir katkı sağlayabilir.

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