

Voices in the Background: Environmental Degradation and Climate Change as Driving Forces of Violence Against Indigenous Women

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Adopted on the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325, Security Council resolution 2242 has recognized for the first time the substantial link between climate change and the “Women, Peace and Security” (WPS) framework. Despite this landmark resolution, the intersections of environmental factors, conflict and violence against women remain largely absent from the Security Council’s WPS agenda. Competition over natural resources is generally understood as a driver of conflict. The risk of insecurity and conflict are further increased by environmental degradation and climate change. It is therefore clear that the environment and natural resources must be integrated into the WPS agenda. This should necessarily include a discussion of indigenous rights to land and the gender-related dimensions of environmental factors. Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, caused by resource extraction and increasingly compounded by climatic changes. This in turn exacerbates other vulnerabilities, including sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of marginalization. This article argues, by reference to the situation in West Papua, that unfettered resource extraction not only amplifies vulnerabilities and exacerbates preexisting inequalities stemming from colonial times, it also gives rise to gendered consequences flowing from the damage wreaked on the natural environment and thus poses a danger to international peace and security. As such, the Security Council’s failure to recognize the continuous struggle of women in indigenous and rural communities against extractive economies and climate change impact as a security risk forms a serious lacuna within its WPS agenda.

Introduction

The adoption of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325 was applauded by many as it brought long overdue recognition of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. Together with nine subsequent resolutions,¹ it forms the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda to serve as a normative and policy framework to address the gender-specific impact of conflict, as well as recognizing the absence of women from peacebuilding as a security concern. Twenty years after its advent, the implementation of this ground-breaking framework has proved to be nothing short of an onerous task and has been subject to significant criticism. Assessing the progress made on implementing resolution 1325, the key finding of UN Women’s Global Study was that “much of the progress toward the implementation of resolution 1325 continues to be measured in ‘firsts,’ rather than as standard practice” (UN Women 2015, 14). In particular, the Global Study highlighted that integration of WPS issues into the Security Council’s everyday business remains highly inconsistent (UN Women 2015, 322–45). More critically, the implementation efforts of the WPS framework were characterized as “superficial, ad hoc and inconsistent,” a process that fails to reflect on information provided by UN organs (NGO Working Group 2019). This article seeks to expose the key challenges and tensions characterizing WPS implementation and application by the Security Council. It aims to unpack how environmental factors in crisis areas exacerbate gender-based violence against indigenous women and the Council’s failure to acknowledge such situations as a security threat is leading in turn to the escalation of violence and an enhanced sense of insecurity among local communities.

With the adoption of the UN Charter in the immediate aftermath of WWII international security has become a fundamental building block of international law. The use of force has been prohibited (UN Charter, art. 2(4)) with the Security Council bearing the primary, though not exclusive,² responsibility in maintaining international peace and security (UN Charter, art. 24(1)). Matters of international security have thus been removed from the exclusive competence of the state. The creation of the system of collective security in Chapter VII of the Charter (art. 39–42) has been a direct consequence of the horrors of WWII and seeks to protect state security. Inspired by the work of Chinkin and Kaldor (2017), this article seeks to demonstrate that the prevailing state-centric principles of international security do not fit with contemporary security challenges and the scope of the WPS agenda remains severely constrained. While in the early twenty-first century the Council has shown increasing willingness to adapt to new challenges to international security, as evidenced by the emerging concept of environmental security and the adoption of its WPS agenda, Council action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter remains entrenched in traditional conceptions of state security and therefore unable to provide effective responses to atypical security challenges that underpin contemporary violence against women.

A great deal of interdisciplinary research and analysis is needed for the WPS agenda to achieve its full potential. Approaching international security as a matter of international law, some of the controversies surrounding effective implementation relate to the deliberate exclusion of resolution 1325, and those which followed, from the scope of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This has led to concerns about the value of the WPS agenda being mainly symbolic

¹The nine subsequent resolutions are: 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2467 (2019); and 2493 (2019).

²The International Court of Justice noted that “Article 24 refers to a primary, but not necessarily exclusive, competence,” *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion, ICJ Reports 2004, p. 136, para 26.

(Otto 2010), its adoption representing a strategic move by the Council to keep its core mandate of maintaining peace and security, heavily relying on military intervention, away “from the (feminising) influence of *Resolution 1325*” (Otto 2009, 21). In that sense, the WPS agenda merely creates a veneer of legitimacy that shrouds continued violence against women on the ground. The fundamental purpose of WPS is understood as “to prevent insecurity and violence (...) and addressing structural gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms that are the barriers to sustainable peace” (True 2020, 5). The key issue then becomes for the Security Council to recast its outdated assumptions about the nature of international security, which increasingly undermine the effectiveness of UNSC administration of it, and make its WPS agenda operational in a broad range of crisis situations outside the conventional understanding of armed conflict.³

Notwithstanding the significant domestic and regional layers of WPS implementation in the form of national and regional action plans, the emphasis of this work is thus on the implementation of the WPS agenda by the Security Council itself. It aims to highlight the Council’s disregard for information provided to it by UN and other actors and maintaining a persistent focus on state security, while emerging new factors increasingly exacerbate human insecurity and fuel violence against women—a contradiction which I argue diminishes the effectiveness of the WPS agenda on all levels. The central argument is that the Council’s approach to its WPS agenda lacks a principled understanding that insecurity of women does not emanate from generalized traditional war conceptions, rather it emerges from specific contexts, generated by separate but interrelated factors which intersect with gender. While national and regional action plans form a crucial complement to the role of the Security Council, the Council’s failure to adapt to nontraditional security challenges inhibits adequate policy considerations by states and progress on the WPS agenda remains precarious and uneven.⁴ This is particularly present in the Asia Pacific region, where the Council’s WPS discourse is viewed as an inherently elitist process which remains disconnected from the struggles and reality within which violence against women unfolds (True 2020, 5; McMinn 2015, 55; George 2014).

While sexual violence against women during armed conflict has received significant and exclusive attention from the Security Council, which was both welcomed and met with concern,⁵ recognition and intervention to address violence targeting indigenous women outside the context of an armed conflict remains largely absent from the Council’s WPS agenda. A great deal of hope was vested in the WPS agenda for transforming international security into a gendered concept, making “the pursuit of gender equality relevant to every single Council action” (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002, 3). For the reasons explored in this article, the positive nature and impact of WPS however cannot be assumed as its application is characterized with profound selectivity both in

relation to “women” and “security.”⁶ Indigenous women in WPS implementation and practice are underrepresented at best, and absent at worst. Indeed, the WPS framework lacks any explicit reference to indigenous women,⁷ and the specific issues and challenges they face while struggling against a persistent colonial legacy in the form of intersectional discrimination, multiple forms of violence, as well as profound repercussions of globalization and development on their cultural and social well-being.⁸ Attacks against indigenous women generally occur in an intrastate setting falling beyond the scope of what the international community considers to constitute a noninternational armed conflict.⁹ Such attacks are often limited to localized yet persistent violence and greatly influenced by environmental factors, as indigenous women who try to defend their lands and community against large-scale exploitation of natural resources and the associated environmental damage are specifically targeted. These challenges are further exacerbated by the impact of climate change. It is such environmentally fuelled violence against indigenous women—committed by both state and nonstate actors—and the underlying power dynamics that prompt perpetrators to commit these atrocities that this article takes issue with.

The key motivation for this enquiry, and one that has been neglected in research to date, has been concerns about the instrumentality of victims within the extraction industry. Gender-based violence against indigenous women rarely constitutes an attack on the individual alone—often it is used by perpetrators as a tactic to displace the community, with impunity of the perpetrators being a norm. It constitutes a highly visible atrocity as a method to instil fear and force communities off their traditional lands, making way for the continuation and expansion of extraction sites. In turn, the impact of resource extraction and climate change on indigenous women is often treated separately from environmental impact, whereas it seems that the two are inherently interlinked. This article underlines the devastating impact of victimization of indigenous women and prompts a reconsideration of current practice by the Security Council to acknowledge such forms of environmentally fuelled violence as a security threat. The Council’s reluctance to do so is particularly disturbing as it sustains human rights violations against indigenous women and thus disempowers them as drivers of change.

Against this backdrop, first section of this article explores the linkages between environmental factors and armed conflict and highlights the striking absence of any gender-related considerations in the field of environmental security. Second section starts with mapping the persistent patterns of sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflict. It will then highlight the parallel experience of

³As argued by Ní Aoláin and Valji, prevention as one of the key pillars of resolution 1325 implies that its application should be “open-ended to any country or region in the world” (Ní Aoláin and Valji 2019, 57).

⁴There is a growing call to reflect on the gender-specific consequences of climate change in national and regional action plans (George 2014, True 2016). At the same time, the incorporation of climate change-related security risks in national action plans remains limited and inconsistent worldwide (Smith 2020).

⁵Resolution 1820 has recognized that sexual violence as a “tactic of war” not only exacerbates armed conflict but also impedes the restoration of international peace and security (UNSC 2008, 1). The limited and selective scope of resolution 1820 was heavily criticized by Otto (Otto 2009, 23–4).

⁶The unhurried and unsatisfactory implementation of resolution 1325 has been highlighted by Otto, pointing out that the Council’s poor accountability record concerning its WPS agenda is in sharp contrast with its more proactive approach toward ensuring implementation of its resolutions on the issues of child soldiers and counterterrorism (Otto 2009, 22).

⁷Except for a general and imprecise mention of “indigenous processes” in resolution 1325, at para 8(b).

⁸A topical overview of the specific issues indigenous women have to struggle with is to be found in the various Briefing Notes prepared by the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, available at <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Briefing%20Notes%20Gender%20and%20Indigenous%20Women.pdf>.

⁹The threshold requirement for the existence of a noninternational armed conflict has been firmly established by the ICTY (Tadić 1995, 70). Concerning the limited scope of WPS application to classic state-centric armed conflicts only, see also Ní Aoláin 2016, 279–80.

indigenous women battling against the extractive industry, revealing a more nuanced picture, and calling for greater reflection on the security implications of environmentally fuelled gender-based violence beyond the scope of an armed conflict. Third section illustrates, by reference to the situation in West Papua, that such violence does not occur in isolation, but intersects with other pressures, leading to an aggravated sense of insecurity and polarization. The analysis is drawing upon the existing research on West Papua's controversial process of decolonization and the devastating impact of decades of Indonesian military rule on the resource-rich territory, confirmed by original research conducted through interviews with displaced indigenous Papuans in Papua New Guinea. Finally, some concluding remarks will be offered in final section.

Natural Resources, Violent Conflict, Climate Change and... Gender?

In the reality of the twenty-first century, conflicts increasingly occur in the context of a range of interrelated complex factors, including climate change vulnerability, environmental degradation, resource extraction, and gender-based violence intrinsically linked to these environmental aspects. The aim of this section is to briefly illustrate the various patterns in which natural resources and climate change interact with, and contribute to armed conflict. It provides examples drawn from some of the major conflicts occurring since the late twentieth century. The examples are intended only to demonstrate some specific points, rather than as a comprehensive account of the course of the actual conflict. Efforts by the UN in general, and the Security Council in particular, to respond to armed violence influenced by environmental factors will be sketched as well.

That competition over natural resources serves as a driver of conflict is by now generally accepted and beyond dispute. Building on the concept introduced by Ballentine and Sherman highlighting the self-financing nature of intrastate conflicts (Ballentine and Sherman 2003, 1), Dam-de Jong explains the role of natural resources in armed conflict based on four separate theories, linked to the conduct, financing, and inception of conflict, as well as creating illicit economic opportunities for third parties (Dam-de Jong 2015, 4–7). Indeed, contemporary forms of violence are often characterized by irregular armed forces exploiting weak state governance and taking control of resource-rich areas—as they represent a significant revenue generator, natural resources constitute a valuable commodity to fight over (UNEP-Interpol 2016). In turn, the economic need to maintain control over and access to resources generally leads to protracted violence and conflict. At the same time, grievances over inequitable sharing of benefits tend to create a myriad of social and ethnic tensions among communities that can promote violence. These challenges are further compounded by environmental degradation and climatic changes which is increasingly leading to the loss of land and other sources of livelihood, creating upheaval in societies (UNEP 2009).

According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), over the last 60 years “[a]t least 40 percent of internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources such as timber, diamonds, oil, fertile land and water” (UNEP 2016a). Moreover, healthy ecosystems and sustainably managed resources have been recognized as playing a key role in reducing the risk of violent conflict (UNEP 2016b, 1). To provide some examples, a

decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone, characterized by brutal violence against the civilian population causing “widespread death, destruction and misery” (Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton 2000, 2), was greatly influenced and shaped by pervasive corruption in the diamond sector and inadequate sharing of benefits.¹⁰ The immense natural wealth of Colombia intersected with structural political and socioeconomic vulnerabilities and served as a significant contributing factor to armed violence and large-scale displacement, with the evident role of natural resources present through the entire conflict cycle (Valenzuela and Caicedo 2018, 245–8). Successful implementation of the 2016 Havana Peace Accords is understood to depend on how environmental issues, including natural resource management, land tenure, and equal land ownership, will be addressed and resolved (UNEP 2017). Comparably, a brutal civil war raged over the island of Bougainville as indigenous communities became incensed and outraged by the inequitable allocation of land and resources, as well as the extreme water pollution and environmental degradation from the Panguna copper mine (Hilson 2007; Boege 2009). In this particular situation, extreme pollution and environment degradation, coupled with the region's troubled colonial history, drove a secessionist movement that escalated into a civil war. In November 2019, the indigenous people of Bougainville held a landmark referendum to decide whether the region will seek independence from Papua New Guinea and become the world's youngest state—a process that marks the end of their struggle for self-determination and is a result of intensive peacebuilding efforts.

Long-standing ills and grievances over inequitable distribution of natural resources, extreme pollution and environmental degradation are not the only fuel of violent conflicts. The changing climate is another. As outlined by Dalby, the academic debate concerning the linkages between climate change, conflict, and security has been confused and controversial at times (Dalby 2018, 42–53). Nevertheless, there is a growing consensus that climate change functions as a “threat multiplier” which exacerbates existing tensions and instability and should be treated as a global security issue. The 2014 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified evident causal connections between climate vulnerability and security risks. According to this report, climate change impact not only exacerbates already existing conflicts, but also generates new tensions by putting a severe additional strain on natural resources and thus increasingly leads to insecurity and inequality (IPCC 2014, 771–5). One of the repercussions of such aggravated environmental scarcity is that it creates significant food and water shortages forcing communities into migration, which in turn can create additional tensions in the receiving areas (Rüttinger et al. 2015). To illustrate this point, it has been argued that diminishing access to water and food played a major role in triggering unrest in Syria and has contributed significantly to the severity of the Syrian conflict (Gleijck 2014). In a similar vein, extreme drought in Somalia, exacerbated by the changing climate, led to an increased number of violent conflict events in the region (Maystadt and Ecker 2014). The ongoing conflict and humanitarian disaster around Lake Chad is severely aggravated by climatic changes, where desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity are pushing communities into the arms of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic state. An estimated 10.7 million people are currently in need of urgent

¹⁰ For a discussion approaching the Sierra Leone conflict from human security perspective, see Kaldor and Vincent 2006 and more generally Hirsch 2001.

humanitarian assistance in that region alone (Vivekananda et al. 2019). Climate change impact thus intensifies instability in already fragile regions. At the same time, it also exacerbates global security challenges, as the massive influx of migrants to Europe in recent years clearly demonstrates.

Environmental factors have thus entered the field of international security, making the concept of environmental security a salient feature within the UN arena. Developed in parallel with the WPS agenda, the past twenty years have witnessed a significant growth of the field of environmental peacebuilding across various UN institutions, albeit functioning in a largely disconnected manner (Jensen and Kron 2018, 121–9). The adverse effect of environmental factors on stability has also been recognized by the Security Council. Illegal exploitation of and illicit trade in conflict diamonds was recognized as “one of the sources fuelling and exacerbating conflicts in West Africa” (UNSC 2005, 2).¹¹ That climate-exacerbated weather events pose a threat to international peace and security has been acknowledged in resolution 2349 (UNSC 2017),¹² while some efforts have been undertaken to incorporate climate-related security risks in UN peacekeeping missions (De Coning, Krampe, and Sherman 2021). While climate change-induced security challenges have only gained limited attention from the Security Council so far, the number of resolutions addressing the significance of natural resources to international peace and security has increased dramatically.¹³

While this notable expansion of UNSC resolutions addressing the natural resource-related dimensions of armed conflict is important and overdue, it continues to be shaped by certain antinomies. In part, these relate to the profoundly fragmented and patchy approach adopted by the Council (Bruch 2017, 34–5).¹⁴ To some extent, this can be explained by the field of environmental peacebuilding treating the influence of natural resources on the different stages of conflict in a divided manner, distinguishing between the various stages of the conflict cycle.¹⁵ The reality on the ground however does not demonstrate such well-defined and separate phases of conflict (Chinkin and Kaldor 2017, 340–1). While each resource conflict has its own unique set of circumstances, the various roles natural resources play at the different stages of conflict are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and these distinctions are often blurred in conflict-affected territories. Yet, it is these distinctions that inform Security Council action when addressing the various linkages between natural resources and security, which has thus failed to adopt a cross-cutting approach on the environmental dimensions of armed conflict. This feeds into broader concerns about Council action being plagued by double standards in situations where the safety of marginalized groups is at stake (Chinkin and Kaldor 2017, 215–6), and national security interests of Council members continue to outweigh any sense of humanitarianism (USIP 2020).

On the other hand, as the Council’s willingness to consider environmental security challenges has grown, so has the gap in its WPS implementation. Considering the gender, environment, and security nexus, comprehensive work

by Detraz distinguishes between the concepts of environmental conflict, environmental security, and ecological security, all three of which considers the experience of environmental insecurity as gender neutral (Detraz 2012, 199–203). According to her, “[T]his understanding masks the important differences in the ways people experience insecurity in their daily lives” (Detraz 2012, 209). There can be no straightforward link established between environmental factors and violent conflict and the degree to which they influence conflict-prone situations will largely depend on the prevailing social, political, and economic inequalities and vulnerabilities based on factors such as gender and ethnicity (UNEP 2009, 8). At the same time, violent attacks based on gender do not occur in isolation, rather they are rooted in preexisting structural inequalities (HRC 2011a, 8). The exploitative and fundamentally unequal nature of resource conflicts further entrenches such inequalities and thus increases women’s vulnerability to violence. Therefore, there remains a need for the UNSC environmental security discourse to reflect on the connections between environmental and other factors, such as gender and race. The Council has however paid little heed to the gendered dimensions of resource conflicts and UNSC resolutions addressing the various linkages between natural resources and armed conflict have remained largely gender blind. Indeed, implementation of WPS into country-specific situations on its agenda, to which the Council is required under its own resolutions,¹⁶ is superficial in some, and completely absent in most of the cases (WILPF 2020, 4) as Council decisions are regularly taken based on gender blind information (NGO Working Group 2019, 1). This indicates that the Council is consciously disregarding information provided to it both by UN and civil society actors concerning the gender implications of environmental factors resulting in a patchwork application of WPS.¹⁷ The glaring disconnect between the environmental and gender dimensions of armed conflict as a security threat is particularly disturbing, as it obscures the interrelations between conflict, environmental factors, and gender-based violence.

Gender-Based Violence During and Beyond Conflict—the Struggle of Indigenous Women Against Extractives

As part of the WPS framework, resolution 2242 has recognized for the first time the existence of a link between climate change and the WPS agenda (UNSC 2015, 2), later followed by resolution 2467 with a similar recognition with relation to conflict minerals (UNSC 2019, 3). While this certainly marks a major watershed, neither of the resolutions offer any evidence of considering environmental factors a significant driver of conflict and violence against women. Hence the intersections of climate change, environmental degradation, resource extraction, conflict, and the parallel violence against women remain substantially marginalized not only in the Council’s discourse on environmental security, as described in the previous section, but also in the WPS implementation and practice. Another significant gap is constituted by the Council’s prevailing preoccupation with conflict-related sexual violence, which discounts and minimizes equally persistent and harmful forms of insecurity with close connection to the extraction industry yet

¹¹ The role of diamonds in the Sierra Leone conflict was also recognized in resolution 1306 (UNSC 2000).

¹² See also UNSC 2011 and UNSC 2018.

¹³ Covering the period between 1998 and 2016, Aldinger, Bruch and Yazykova have identified 336 resolutions addressing natural resources or the environment (Aldinger, Bruch, and Yazykova 2018, 144).

¹⁴ For a detailed overview, see Aldinger, Bruch, and Yazykova 2018, 146–63.

¹⁵ As explained by Jensen and Kron, the field of environmental peacebuilding is divided into three main areas looking at the role of natural resources prior, during, and post-conflict (Jensen and Kron 2018, 122).

¹⁶ See, for example, UNSC 2015, 5b.

¹⁷ This information will be discussed in the next session, to the extent relevant for the specific focus of this work, that is, environmentally fuelled violence against indigenous women.

occurring outside the scope of an armed conflict. As there is a continued dominance of gender-based violence, triggered both by traditional and nontraditional security challenges, there is an urgent need for the WPS agenda to be made operational and extended into other contexts as well, beyond the conventional understanding of conflict.

The issue of gender-based violence during conflict, most commonly though not exclusively targeting women and girls, has gained a preeminent position within the WPS framework (UNSC 2019). Despite continuous efforts to eliminate such violence and ensure accountability for perpetrators, gender-based violence remains pervasive in many countries with high levels of impunity and is regularly used as a weapon of war (UNSG 2019). It has been argued that gender plays a significant role in the crime of genocide, as it is through gendered acts that “perpetrators maximize the crime’s destructive impact on protected groups” (Global Justice Center 2018, 2). Indeed, during the 1990s, both conflicts in the former Yugoslavia¹⁸ and Rwanda (HRW 1996) were notorious for particularly violent attacks on women and girls. According to the UN, “more than 60,000 women were raped during the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991–2002), more than 40,000 in Liberia (1989–2003), up to 60,000 in the former Yugoslavia (1992–1995), and at least 200,000 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998” (UN Background Note 2014, 1). More recently, sexual and gender-based violence against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar is evidenced by a well-documented report by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC 2019b). Regular reports by the UN Mission in South Sudan give a detailed account of a pattern of conflict-related sexual violence in the region, including rape, gang rape, and sexual slavery (OHCHR 2019).

Environmental factors, such as resource extraction, degradation of the natural environment, and climate change are compounding these challenges. At the same time, violence against women increasingly occurs outside the scope of a conventional armed conflict, fuelled by non-traditional security challenges. The gender, environment and security nexus has attracted increasing attention in academic discourse in recent years, pointing to the fact that women’s experience of environmental change and degradation is fundamentally different from that of men. Detraz has argued that there are various sources of environmental insecurity that women need to navigate on an everyday basis, illustrating this by discussing the disproportionate impact of natural disasters and food insecurity on women due to socially constructed gender norms (Detraz 2012, 209–13). Elsewhere, she has argued that the social construction of sexuality and gender identity has a bearing on various concepts that are integral to environmental security, such as sustainability, health, or poverty. Highlighting the inherently harmful effect of military solutions to security risks, she has advocated for a gender-focused approach to environmental security issues, the key elements of which should be human security, gender justice, and environmental sustainability (Detraz 2014, 152–65). A gender-focused analysis of environmental security would contribute to a better understanding of the connections between various forms of insecurity, such as that between militarism and violence against women, or between environmental damage and domestic violence. George has explained how a narrow focus on traditional “active” violence occurring in the course of an armed conflict discounts various forms of “attenu-

ated and structural” violence (George 2014, 324). Building on a concept developed by Nixon, she refers to the latter as “slow violence”—climate change-induced environmental degradation intersects with continued militarism and colonial influences across the Pacific region and increasingly aggravates insecurity of women. This form of insecurity however has remained invisible and without any response in regional WPS discourse (George 2014). This has been recently echoed by True, pointing to the disturbing limits of the violence that is called into view in regional WPS discourse in Asia Pacific due to the persistent misperception that it applies to armed conflicts only, as well as the region’s continued underrepresentation in global debates, urging for a greater reflection on the region’s unique challenges by UN institutions (True 2020, 5).¹⁹

While the analysis to date has been mostly focusing on international relations and policy debates, there is also a growing perception of the striking absence of women in international legal frameworks dealing with the protection of the environment at the various stages of an armed conflict. As aptly stated by Yoshida, “women’s rights are often at the periphery of the international legal ecosystem” (Yoshida 2020, 287). Important work has been done in this regard by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW or Committee). In its General Recommendation 37, the Committee has for the first time acknowledged and emphasized the link between natural disasters, climate change, and women’s rights (CEDAW 2018). More specifically, building on its findings in General Recommendation 35 on gender-based violence (CEDAW 2017), the Committee noted that environmental factors lead to a heightened risk of gender-based violence against women and girls (CEDAW 2018, 55–6). Particularly remarkable are the CEDAW’s efforts to include the specific needs and concerns of indigenous women throughout its Recommendation,²⁰ which is in striking contrast to the absence of any such considerations from the Security Council’s WPS discourse. This feeds into earlier considerations by the Committee that upholding women’s rights in a conflict situation is not limited to an overt conflict but must be guaranteed in “other situations of concern” as well, which “may not necessarily be classified as an armed conflict under international humanitarian law” (CEDAW 2013, 2). Similarly, a notable and significant attention has been given recently by UN institutions to the gender, climate, and security nexus. Building on evidence from the field, the recent UN report attempts to contribute to a better understanding of the gender implications of the linkage between climate-induced environmental damage and conflict (UNEP 2020).

This enhanced level of reflection on the gender, environment, and security nexus within the UN arena is significant. It signals the continued dominance and widespread nature of violence against women, generated both by traditional and nontraditional factors and not necessarily linked to an armed conflict. Neither of these concerns have been matched by appropriate UNSC action. The Council’s failure to address the CEDAW’s findings on environmentally fuelled violence against indigenous women underscores the existing “implementation deficit” in its WPS agenda, which seems to have been generated by lack of commitment by Council members to reflect carefully on information provided to it by UN actors (UN Women 2015, 330–1). This contention is supported by the Security Council’s failure to inform its WPS agenda by frequent reporting by UN human

¹⁸ For specifics on conflict-related sexual violence during the Yugoslav war, see <https://www.icty.org/en/features/crimes-sexual-violence>.

¹⁹ See also True 2016.

²⁰ See, for example, paras 2, 4, 26(a), 36(c), 37, 54(c), 57(e), 68(f), (g) or 70.

rights bodies highlighting the pervasive and systematic nature of violence against indigenous women.²¹

Resource extraction activities in or nearby traditional lands of indigenous communities constitute “one of the most significant sources of abuse of the rights of indigenous people worldwide” (HRC 2011b, 18). Acquisition of indigenous land for extractive activities is characterized by heavy-handed military practices, neglect of indigenous rights to land and resources, and environmental degradation, with a particularly devastating impact on women (HRC 2006, 8:13; DESA 2009, 17, 225–6). These challenges are increasingly aggravated by climatic changes (DESA 2009, 95–7; UN Women 2016, 26). Indigenous women are dependent on access to land and resources in order to exercise their traditional gender-based roles. The loss and degradation of their natural environment due to extraction activities and climate change impact not only leaves entire communities displaced, it also has a monumental impact on the well-being of indigenous women pushing them further into marginalization, poverty and making them vulnerable to various forms of violence and social stigmatization (DESA 2009, 226; UN Women 2016, 46).

Attacks against indigenous women worldwide have become increasingly violent, deadly even, in cases where they attempt to defend their communities and livelihoods against extractive and development projects, with the numbers of recorded violent incidents rising year after year.²² In addition to the tireless civil society efforts to expose the scale and brutality of attacks against indigenous women, various UN Special Rapporteurs were raising alarm as well about the escalation of violence. While the most common atrocities are death threats, murder, and rape, violence against indigenous women manifests in different forms of physical and mental abuse (HRC 2011c, 68–9), with the majority of these atrocities closely linked to the extractive industry (HRC 2018, 4, 28). As armed forces—state or private—tend to occupy resource-rich regions to secure extraction sites for their own economic benefit, many indigenous communities live in militarized territories. Indeed, a common feature across reports is the involvement of military and security forces in widespread human rights abuses targeting indigenous environmental defenders (Knox 2017, 8, 12; HRC 2018, 4, 32, 57, 59; HRC 2019a, 32).

While the widespread and systematic use of violence against indigenous women by military forces in resource-rich regions is by now well documented both by UN and civil society actors, the situation is not easily characterized as an internal armed conflict. Despite some, albeit limited recognition of environmental security challenges by the Security Council,²³ such localized forms of violence against indigenous women, fuelled by environmental factors yet outside the scope of an armed conflict, will be unlikely to trigger Security Council attention, as it would not be perceived as a potential threat to international peace and security under article 39 of the UN Charter. The dissonance between the Council’s approach and everyday reality stems from the WPS framework remaining firmly rooted in the traditional international legal system, the cornerstone of which is formed by state sovereignty and localized armed violence occurring within the borders of a single state is often dismissed based on the principle of nonintervention. This underscores a

point made by Otto, that the Council’s selectivity in focusing on certain issues, while neglecting others, in WPS implementation is mainly motivated by a militaristic and state-centric approach to security (Otto 2009, 25). The concept of security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter thus remains constrained by traditional approaches whereby the security of state and capital is routinely given priority over the safety of marginalized groups.²⁴ At the same time, the WPS framework lacks universal application and instead is applicable to country-specific situations only, already on the Security Council’s agenda (UNSC 2015, 5b),²⁵ effectively rendering the experiences of indigenous women invisible and beyond any redress. Such flawed implementation by the Council is further compounded, as the pervasive insecurity of indigenous women is not captured within the domestic and regional layers of WPS either. Extending its agenda beyond the confines of a conventional armed conflict and adopting a broader scope of issues contributing to women’s insecurity would also enhance adequate policy considerations by states leading to a more uniform approach within the WPS agenda.

On the other hand, UNSC administration of international peace and security has been increasingly criticized, questioning its effectiveness in bringing about much needed social or political change as there is a profound contradiction in the Council’s increased tendency to authorize the use of force on humanitarian grounds (Chinkin and Kaldor 2017, 198–202). Military intervention with the apparent aim to enhance human rights is seen as particularly harmful for women, a method which aggravates conflict and insecurity, rather than restores or keeps the peace (Detraz 2012, 80–114). Surely, a military intervention is not a neutral or isolated exercise which, even if ineffective, can do little harm—there is an urgent need for rethinking the violence-generating potential of UNSC authorized military interventions as an appropriate method of restoring international peace and security.²⁶ This critique notwithstanding, and without any intention to promote militarized solutions, the point here relates to the inherent weight that might be attached to a UNSC recognition of a certain situation as a threat to international peace and security. While its value should certainly not be assumed, such recognition constitutes a powerful signal which may empower civil society and social movements that are otherwise silenced by oppressive governments. It may catalyze mechanisms aimed at combatting impunity for gender-based violence. It may lead to efforts uncovering information and contributing to historical records of colonial wrongs. It may enable women to embrace their role as local agents of much needed change. The Council’s striking ignorance of environmentally fuelled violence against indigenous women, on the contrary, entrenches a predatory political economy in which revenue-generating activity depends on oppression and violence. Failure to recognize such situations as a security threat in fact contributes to the escalation of violence and exacerbates human insecurity. The situation in West Papua is particularly well suited to illustrate these complex dynamics.

²⁴ The incorporation of human security into the UN collective security system has been greatly hampered by jurisdictional, normative, and operational challenges (Nasu 2013, 101).

²⁵ See also Ni Aoláin, Valji, 2019, 57–8.

²⁶ Chinkin and Kaldor have advocated for the adoption of a second-generation human security (Chinkin and Kaldor 2017, 479–526). For similar concerns with relation to the US intervention in Afghanistan see Nayak 2006.

²¹ See, for example, HRC 2011a, HRC 2015, HRC 2018, HRC 2019a.

²² Violence against indigenous (female) environmental defenders are regularly recorded by various civil society actors, see for example, Coalition for Human Rights in Development 2018, Global Witness 2018, Global Witness 2020.

²³ As explained in second section.

The Case of West Papua²⁷

Annamaria was sitting on the rough-hewn stairs of her house, shared with 11 family members, little more than a simple assemblage of reed walls and a roof of some combination of rope and palm leaves. At the age of 24, she has spent most of her life in an improvised refugee settlement in Papua New Guinea's (PNG) Western Province, about two kilometers away from the international border with Indonesia, hidden in dense jungle along the Fly river. The cleared area is jammed with multigenerational houses like that of Annamaria, further there is a small church, a school building, and a store with basic supplies. Annamaria took me on a brief tour to the food gardens around the settlement. The gardens belong to the community, women and girls have been working in even labor shifts clearing bush with nothing else than machetes. They return daily to the gardens to tend to their subsistence crops and collect water from the river. In the meantime, toxic mine-waste from the neighboring mine is being discharged directly into the Fly river. As mine sediment builds up, it causes the riverbed to rise, forcing mine-contaminated water onto the food gardens, as well as into the refugee sites.

Annamaria is one of the many thousands West Papuan refugees who fled east to PNG escaping political turmoil, economic discontent, and military violence. In 2016, I conducted an on-site visit to a refugee settlement in PNG along the Indonesian border.²⁸ Unwilling to leave their traditional lands spanning across the artificial straight line which divided New Guinea between various colonial powers, many displaced West Papuans reside in improvised settlements on the PNG side.²⁹ Located on the other half of the island of New Guinea, West Papua is a militarized territory, the site of a long-term yet low-level conflict between Indonesia and indigenous Papuans seeking self-determination. The territory's decolonization process in the 1950–1960s remains contested. While the Netherlands, then the colonial power, was favoring the process of decolonization based on UN standards, continued Indonesian military action in West Papua fuelled global security concerns in the wake of the ongoing Cold War.³⁰ In an eerie prediction of what was soon to happen in West Papua, Indonesian authorities made clear they would not hesitate to “resort to methods which would startle the world if the United Nations did not comply with his Government's wishes,” that is integrating West Papua to its territory without any consultation of the Papua people.³¹ A compromise was reached by negotiating the New York Agreement, a bilateral treaty between the Nether-

lands and Indonesia, under which control over West Papua was transferred to Indonesia, following a short intermediary UN administration.³² Pursuant to Article XVIII(d) of the New York Agreement, Indonesian authorities were under the obligation to ensure that the Papua people can exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with international standards. The promised act of self-determination in the form of the UN supervised 1969 Act of Free Choice was however characterized by heavy-handed military practices (UN 1969, 70:251), leading to a “substantial denial of self-determination” (Cassese 1995, 84). Presumably not anticipating the subsequent massive human rights violations, the UN General Assembly took note, as opposed to affirming, of the outcome of the 1969 referendum in resolution 2504.

Such a manifestly flawed process of decolonization has fanned the perception of UN betrayal among Papua communities which has greatly influenced and shaped the conflict dynamics in West Papua and has created far-reaching and devastating ripple effects for indigenous communities. Opposition to Indonesian military rule and “neo-colonial administration” (Hedman 2007, 7) soon mounted and the secessionist sentiment grew leading to the emergence of a pro-independence group, the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka), engaged in occasional armed attacks against Indonesian forces. Indonesian military campaigns in response have developed into a widespread system of excessive and often lethal violence used against Papuans,³³ which in turn has created a persistent pattern of large-scale internal displacement (Chauvel 2007, 42–50).³⁴ Massive military campaigns launched in 1977 and 1984 have led to concerns about an intended genocide against the Papua people (ICP 2013) and thousands of West Papuans fled east to PNG to escape the violence (McGibbon 2006, 30–1). One of the interviewees at the refugee settlement explained that those currently residing there escaped from military violence in 1984 and recalled the day from his childhood when Indonesian military entered his village and raped the women, including his mother and aunt:

“First in 1984, April 22nd when I was on my first term holiday... and it was on my land that they came and settle to meet... when I was 12 years old. That was the first question when these people settled, when they migrated and settled... Those are the ones who were living here, and some went to Ioara [official PNG refugee camp] and some went back [to West Papua]. But the majority, the entire community, from different areas and villages where they came, they settled in different areas... And the first one was my mother and my auntie when they came into those situation [person chokes up].”³⁵

At the same time, West Papua has seen a tremendous growth in various extraction activities. Central to the ongoing conflict is the Grasberg mine containing one of the world's largest reserve of copper and gold and thus a major contributor to Indonesian government revenue (Leith 2003, 64–5). Combined with other large-scale

²⁷ The author's reference to West Papua concerns the entire western half of the island of New Guinea, including both Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua. For a detailed case study on the situation in West Papua, see Csevár 2020.

²⁸ In the given period, the author was involved with the Dutch branch of the NGO International Lawyers for West Papua as a pro bono legal officer. This visit took place in October 2016 and was conducted in a personal capacity, in response to an invitation received from the elders of the Papuan refugee community in PNG, residing in the border areas. The interviews conducted did not follow a pre-designed pattern, rather left the initiative with the community members to determine what topic they feel comfortable to talk about. Topics discussed concerned mainly the circumstances that forced the community members to seek refuge in PNG, and their everyday concerns about the lack of access to adequate health and educational services, increasing food and water insecurity, as well as continuous fear of Indonesian forces crossing the border to enter the settlements.

²⁹ UNHCR Country Operations Plan 2007–Papua New Guinea, available at [UNHCR—UNHCR Country Operations Plan 2007–Papua New Guinea](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/papua-new-guinea).

³⁰ Military invasion of West Papua by Indonesia commenced in 1962, pushing the territory into decades of deep militarization (Hedman 2007, 7). See also UNSF Background.

³¹ Yearbook of the United Nations, volume 1957, 78.

³² Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning West New Guinea (West Irian), No 6311 (1962). <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20437/volume-437-I-6311-English.pdf>.

³³ See, for example, HRW 2007 or McGibbon 2006.

³⁴ See also IDMC 2020 concerning recent figures on displacement in West Papua.

³⁵ Determining an approximate number of Papuan women victimized by Indonesian forces during the military campaigns in the 1970s–80s is virtually impossible due to severely restricted access to West Papua by human rights workers. For some recorded incidents, see Asia Justice and Rights 2019; ICTJ 2009–2010; ICP 2013, 14–7.

projects,³⁶ under Indonesian control the territory has been put under continuous extractive pressure, which has become an overriding security concern among the local population. Controversial militarization of the extractive industry, aimed at protecting “Indonesian economic interests in the area” (ESC 1999, 22:100), has entrenched various armed groups and left a legacy of grievances and polarization, as the political and economic interests of security forces have driven further violence (ICG 2007; Global Witness 2005). Exclusion of indigenous Papuans from benefit and revenue sharing and highly unequal land ownership has fuelled resentment and opposition to continued extraction, which in turn has led to an increased level of violence in the vicinity of extraction sites (Ballard 2001, 22–31; Leith 2003, 195–204). Continued military operations have been aimed at forced displacement and nonconsensual relocation of indigenous communities, and thus have secured the continuous expansion of extraction sites (Leith 2003, 213).

Armed violence continues to present day with various degrees of intensity, with contemporary clashes between Indonesian forces and Papuans remaining firmly rooted in the territory’s unresolved political conflict.³⁷ The major mining project at Grasberg, as well as other significant resource extraction activities in West Papua, is thus operating within the context of high-level insecurity, weak governance, and low public trust. In the meantime, the scale of pollution and environmental degradation caused by unsound extraction practices has been significant, with the indigenous communities who bear the burden of the massive damage caused to their livelihoods (CIFR 2014; McKenna 2015, 171–6). Increasing climate change impact has further disrupted traditional food and water resources, affecting marginalized Papuan communities the most. (Csevár 2020, 9–11).

At the refugee settlement, the firm rejection of Indonesian rule and associated extraction activity dominated the discussion:

“In 1962 was the agreement between the Americans, the Indonesians, and Dutch [the New York Agreement], it was signed... It wasn’t done in a proper way... There was no negotiation with the Papua people... It was promised to West Papuans that after five years they will be given independence. In that time, that period of time, business people for Indonesians were given opportunity to travel to the ground of West Papua to set up business. And then they occupied the land... This was done in Jakarta... The game the political is playing this time between the Indonesians and the West Papuans, Indonesians are playing its politic in terms of development to attract all this West Papuans, the ones who are living here to move back to West Papua. So their entitlement will be lost, as West Papuans as Melanesians, and then the Indonesians will take over their ground. That is playing through terms of development. That’s one, and also business. Also, there are some other things. Which is through the females, it is through the family planning wise. Method is being given to them, to stop pregnancy, and also to the young ones, treatment is given to them. Not to have family planning, different methods are given to them... There is this situation, and this bringing in conflict, and then fear and frustration into their ground, into their land. And then these people, they have no idea of what they can do. And

then in reality, they see that these Indonesians are taking control over their land.”

Military violence against indigenous Papua women has been ubiquitous and is intrinsically linked to resource extraction and the territory’s colonial origins. Over the decades, Papuan women suspected of collaboration with the OPM have endured high rates of (gang) rape and torture,³⁸ with some accounts describing particularly sadistic sexual attacks (Braithwaite et al 2010, 62–3). In particular, sexual violence has flourished around the Grasberg mine site, where indiscriminate attacks against women were reported, including rape of girls and pregnant women (ESC 1999, 22:100). At other extraction sites, accounts of repeated gang rape of a 12-year-old girl by Indonesian soldiers in front of her parents were recorded. Other widespread gendered abuses in the vicinity of extraction sites include torture, arbitrary detention, extra-judicial killings, as well as large-scale population displacement.³⁹ Many victims have given birth to children from rape. Within their communities, both mother and child are faced with intergenerational stigmatization, rejection and marginalization by their families, forming a major impediment to their access to health, education of employment opportunities, and making them vulnerable to domestic violence and marginalization (Asia Justice and Rights 2019, 28–9). These challenges are further compounded by the destruction of land through environmental damage from extraction project or aggravated climate change impact. The loss of traditional livelihoods has a detrimental impact on Papuan women, whose health and well-being depends on access to native lands for the exercise of their traditional gender-based roles (Asia Justice and Rights 2019, 36–41). The breakdown of these traditional roles then creates additional vulnerability to domestic violence and abuse (ICTJ 2009–2010, 38–49).

The complex relationship between militarization, gender, and sexual violence during conflict has been subject to in-depth analysis by Baaz and Stern, challenging the largely generalized narrative of sexual violence as a weapon of war as a blanket explanation of violent acts targeting women. Instead, they offer a critical account of sexual violence during conflict where the strategic use of such attacks largely depends on the specific context, motives, and experiences on the ground (Baaz and Stern 2013). Indeed, the phenomenon of “layered violence” (ICTJ 2009–2010, 49) targeting Papua women cannot be considered in isolation from the overall security context, as it is taking place against the backdrop of political instability and militarized resource extraction. Sexual violence against Papua women and the social stigma associated with it forms an attack not only on the individual, but also on the underlying cultural norms—it constitutes a highly visible atrocity to spread fear and terror among the population. As family and community members are forced to witness the rape of their daughters, sisters, and wives, sexual violence against women is utilized by the perpetrator with the objective to create a psychosocial impact on the community by extending the heavy stigma attached to sexual assault to the family members. Raping young girls also has an impact for the wider community, as virginity is considered as a “high premium” in the society (ESC 1999, 22:103). Gender-based violence and displacement become inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing—victimization of indigenous women is utilized to debase the

³⁶ Other large-scale extraction projects with far-reaching environmental and social impacts include, for example, massive oil palm plantation development, or logging.

³⁷ Comment by UN Human Rights Office Spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani on Papua and West Papua, Indonesia, November 30 2020. <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/papua-statement/>. See also May 2021.

³⁸ For examples of such atrocities, see Asia Justice and Rights 2019, 23–5; ICTJ 2009–2010, 19–20, 22, 25, 28–30.

³⁹ See, for example, ICTJ 2009–2010, 21, 23–4, 31–5; ESC 1999, 22–4. Concerning conflict related internal displacement, see Chauvel 2007, 42–50; IDMC 2014.

entire community, in turn, displacement accentuates domestic and ethnic tensions leading to continued violence against women. Sexual assault on Papua women thus becomes interlinked with political violence and the economic need to acquire and maintain positions of control over natural resources.

Such environmentally fuelled gender-based violence intersects with the colonial legacy of institutionalized discrimination, marginalization, and poverty of indigenous women, reflecting and reinforcing patriarchal norms and behaviors. What seems to be a common factor of these atrocities is the attack on the social norms—perpetrators exploit traditional relations and social stigma attached to sexual violence not only to humiliate the individual, but to disrupt entire communities, leading to an enhanced sense of insecurity and polarization. In such fragile situations, environmental degradation as a result of extraction activities and climate change will inevitably influence the root causes of tension increasing the pattern of oppression among indigenous communities, which in turn increases the potential of instability and conflict.

The gendered patterns of military rule and extractive pressures in West Papua cannot be overlooked. The territory's unresolved political conflict interlinked with militarized extractive projects have resulted in continuing conflict, deteriorating security situation and systematic and flagrant human rights violations, undermining the safety and security of indigenous women. The loss of traditional livelihoods—due to forced displacement, environmental degradation, or both—leads to eroding traditional values where women are no longer able to carry out their traditional gender-based roles. Coupled with high levels of military and domestic violence and severe social stigmatization, indigenous women find themselves locked into repeating cycles of violence, marginalization, and isolation. The Papuan experience is thus demonstrative of the disastrous impact of both resource extraction resulting in excessive environmental degradation, and a strong military presence on grassroots communities and the parallel victimization of women.

Conclusion

West Papua has been marked by decades of internal armed violence, military rule and isolation, while international media and human rights workers have been consistently and systematically banned from entering the territory (HRW 2015). In the context of West Papua's unresolved political conflict, the interaction of different power structures—capitalism, militarization, and exploitation of nature and resources—has led to continuous instability and decreasing legitimacy of Indonesian authority in West Papua among the local population. Adding to decades of armed violence and widespread displacement amid reports of human rights abuses,⁴⁰ environmental factors in the form of extreme pollution, environmental degradation, and climate stress interact with the underlying political and socioeconomic vulnerabilities and further increase the pattern of oppression among indigenous Papuans.

Yet, dissent from Indonesian rule by indigenous communities remained largely peaceful despite the violent military rule. A turning point however seems to have been reached in 2019, when violent and racist military actions against Papuan students led to thousands of indigenous Papuans taking the streets opposing institutionalized discrimination

and marginalization and the continuous mistreatment by military forces, demanding a free exercise of their right to self-determination. The violent crackdown by Indonesian police and security forces of the peaceful demonstrations have triggered a reaction on both the regional and UN level, urging the Indonesian authorities to cease military action and allow for a UN visit to West Papua (Koman 2020, 25). At the same time, indigenous communities are becoming more and more incensed and outraged by the continuing brutality of Indonesian forces. While the situation in West Papua is becoming increasingly fragile with the risk of escalating into a full-fledged internal armed conflict, it has not triggered any attention from the Security Council considering the situation as a potential threat to peace or security, effectively rendering its WPS agenda inapplicable to the situation of indigenous Papua women. In the meantime, the legacy of decades of conflict-related sexual violence and abuse against indigenous women remains unresolved and unacknowledged by the Indonesian authorities as well. In light of the general Papua perception of UN betrayal during decolonization, UNSC ignorance of the situation continues to betray all hopes in West Papua. In the given specific context, UNSC recognition of the severity of the situation would play a pivotal role in disrupting the cycle of violence against women and would constitute a powerful instrument for them to embrace their role, as envisaged under the WPS agenda, as agents of change. It would enable a UN visit to the territory to assess the situation in the absence of consent from Indonesian authorities. The Council's ignorance, on the contrary, implicitly approves and thus contributes to continuing violence—it freezes the contested status quo of Indonesian rule over West Papua and sustains massive human rights violations at the expense of Papua communities.

By maintaining focus on outdated conceptions of armed conflict, the Security Council has failed to accommodate to the realities of today's conflicts.⁴¹ The WPS agenda is thus severely constrained by traditional assumptions about the nature of international peace and security, concentrating national security interests at the expense of marginalized communities. Security Council implementation of WPS does not reflect a principled understanding of the realities for victims on the ground, as it views women as a homogeneous group and assumes a clear dividing line between armed conflict and peace, where violence against women is limited to wartime only. In so doing, it ignores pressing issues and valuable information brought to it by UN and civil society actors and brings WPS into disrepute in a broad range of conflict-prone situations. Instead, the Council seems to adopt a simplistic "one-size-fits-all" approach in a select country-specific situation on its agenda, which is absurd and dangerous. Controversial militarization of the extraction industry at the expense of indigenous communities establishes a predatory set of circumstances which entrenches inequality and in which perpetrators have a vested economic interest in continued violence to maintain access to natural resources, leading to protracted conflict with the potential to spill over borders.

The disproportionate impact that environmental factors have on indigenous women battling against the extractive industry in a conflict-prone territory feed into a wider sense of fear and insecurity among the indigenous communities, as military operations involving gender-based attacks against Papuan women in general, and defenders of human and environmental rights in particular, continue unabated. As

⁴⁰ For an extensive, though not exhaustive, list of reports on the human rights situation in West Papua, see Csevár 2020, fn 20.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the characteristics of "new wars," see Chinkin and Kaldor 2017, 5–19.

integration of the WPS framework into the Security Council's agenda lacks a holistic approach to both security and gender, it fails to capture the specific threats against and needs of indigenous Papuan women, whose voices thus far have remained a background noise, and their experiences beyond any redress. This demonstrates that the Security Council's failure to recognize the struggle of indigenous women against extractive pressures and climate stress in a conflict-prone territory as a security concern constitutes a serious lacuna within its WPS agenda underscoring the need to adopt an integrated approach to the environmental and gender dimension of conflict moving toward a multidimensional definition of human security.

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