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Kissing the frog: Gender equality in EU conflict prevention and other fairy tales

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Abstract	<p>This report draws on feminist analysis of EU foreign policy to critically assess EU commitments to gender equality and to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in EU conflict prevention policy, and the dominant assumptions underpinning EU conflict prevention and offers recommendations for how the EU can improve its conflict prevention interventions by integrating gender equality throughout its foreign policy.</p>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EU foreign policy should be guided by equality, among other principles (European Union, 2008, p. Art. 21). However, this report demonstrates that EU conflict prevention continues to be patriarchal and Othering¹ even if EU rhetoric would have us believe that gender analysis and gender equality are integrated into conflict prevention interventions. This report draws on feminist analysis of EU foreign policy to critically assess EU commitments to gender equality and to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in EU conflict prevention policy. It provides a closer examination of the dominant assumptions underpinning EU conflict prevention in order to improve the EU's contribution to preventing conflict outside its borders. Its main findings are the following:

“Gender” terms are exclusive. “Gender” is usually reduced to mean “women and girls,” or, at its most inclusive, heterosexual women and men. This excludes the range of gender identities that do not conform to this narrow definition as well as the social divisions (such as race, class) that combine to form power relationships between different gender identities across and between individuals, communities, social and formal institutions that determine differential access to power and resources.

EU foreign policy is heavily gendered. Men's invisible agency flows throughout, while male victims of violence are ignored. Other women are passive, vulnerable, infantilised, instrumentalised and often sexualised recipients of European aid. Sexual and gender minorities are excluded.

EU conflict prevention policy is gender-blind by design and therefore will Do Harm even when “successful” by reinforcing existing structural gendered inequalities and dominant (gendered) interests present in the conflict context. Gender analysis is not taken into consideration in the formulation of EU conflict prevention policy or recognised as important. Conflict prevention initiatives will, therefore, reinforce the dominant (gendered) interests in conflicts unless rigorous gender analysis is integrated as a matter of course into conflict analysis and gender equality objectives placed at the heart of conflict prevention policies and practice.

“Gender equality” has been largely reduced to privileging the interests of European, predominantly White, middle class and heterosexual women within the masculinised EU security structures.

- Gender equality has not been mainstreamed across external action, despite the EU's commitments to the WPS agenda, and is not adequately considered, let alone addressed, in conflict prevention policies. The latest policy iteration, the Council Conclusions of January 2018, does not mention gender at all beyond a formulaic reference to WPS. Structural gendered inequality is routinely left out of the list of root causes of conflict.
- The role of women in peacebuilding is essentialised, i.e. reduced to the “woman as natural peacebuilder” cliché, and limited to the community level. The idea that different women play multiple roles, have different interests, needs and perspectives in peacebuilding and in

¹ Simone de Beauvoir drew on Levinas to differentiate between the Subject, Absolute (man) and the Other (woman), noting that the construction of Self-Other is as old as human consciousness (de Beauvoir, 1949, 1976 p.18). The concept of othering is not new to EU studies – see for example Diez (2005). Diez uses ‘other’ states, threats, values – a range of ‘others’ to distinguish from the EU ‘self’ but not Other people as in this report, following de Beauvoir.

conflict is alien. Gender analysis does not appear to be included in early warning or conflict analysis in any systematic way.

- The EU places heavy emphasis on the part of the WPS agenda that deals with improving the gender balance within the EU peace and security apparatus; cooption and conforming to masculinised security structures. This is not the same as, and does not automatically lead to the EU contributing to increased gender equality in conflict-affected situations, and may exclude Other women further. However, the EEAS has shown that there are insufficient resources for the implementation and enforcement of the WPS agenda, even to obtain adequate levels of *reporting* from its own Delegations and EUSRs. The gender ratio of senior positions remains very poor. The onus is on women to change the balance, not on the system to change to become more inclusive. **Focusing on internal quick-wins for gender equality initiatives, especially within the WPS silo, may undermine larger-scale feminist objectives for EU conflict prevention**, by distracting attention from the patriarchal and Othering foreign policy context. There is insufficient discussion from a feminist perspective about what the EU should achieve in the world, and how.

Policy recommendations:

1. Researchers and practitioners should challenge patriarchal assumptions of power in EU foreign policy by developing a body of analysis that identifies the main challenges, entry points and opportunities for change, and clarifies feminist objectives for foreign policy and conflict prevention.
2. Conflict prevention advocates within the EU should work with new alliances to contribute to a broader discussion on the role of the EU in conflict-affected areas, and specifically developing alliances with feminist scholars and activists to learn from the experiences and viewpoints of non-European feminists, particularly those in conflict-affected areas, and from feminists targeting intra-European policy to inform advocacy on EU foreign policy.
3. Ten years after its adoption in 2008, the EEAS's Principal Advisor on Gender should coordinate a process to revise and update the EU's Comprehensive Approach to UNSCR 1325, emphasizing the importance of promoting gender equality across all foreign policy interventions in conflict-affected situations.
4. Senior management of the EEAS and DEVCO, supported by the peacebuilding/conflict prevention advocacy community (particularly policy-makers, civil society practitioners and scholars) should support a more transformative feminist approach to EU foreign policy in line with core peacebuilding principles by establishing the necessary systems to:
 - analyse the power dynamics inherent in EU conflict prevention policy and practice, at headquarters level and in programming on the ground and the gendered implications of these; and design feedback loops to ensure this learning informs programming;
 - ensure that rigorous gender analysis is integrated into conflict analysis, and that gender equality objectives are moved to the heart of conflict prevention policies and programmes and their implementation is monitored and enforced; and
 - identify and use smarter indicators of success/backsliding than the quick wins associated with counting numbers of women present in institutions.

INTRODUCTION²

This report draws on feminist analysis of EU foreign policy to critically assess the EU's implementation of its commitments to gender, peace and security in conflict prevention. It does so by considering the extent to which the EU has integrated gender equality in conflict prevention policy, and reflecting on implementation of its commitments to WPS. Although EU scholarship and textbooks increasingly include a section on 'gender', usually related to women's experience of the workplace and the family, feminist analysis of EU foreign policy, and particularly, of EU interventions in conflict-affected areas is almost non-existent. Feminist theorising is necessary because 'if masculine power is embedded in European integration and not carefully examined, it is simply reproduced' (Kronsell, 2016a, p. 104). The failure to analyse gendered power within European institutions, and regarding the power that the EU projects beyond its borders, has therefore led to a limited understanding of the nature and effects of the EU's power, and how that power is acquired, maintained, exercised and resisted. This report aims to stimulate discussion amongst feminist (and) conflict prevention scholars and practitioners regarding the EU's role in preventing violent conflict. It also provides a closer examination of the dominant assumptions underpinning EU conflict prevention in order to improve the EU's contribution to preventing conflict outside its borders.

Drawing on scholarship on 'gender,' 'equality' and foreign policy, this report is primarily empirical and offers a feminist analysis of official policy documents. As noted above, this is the first such analysis of EU conflict prevention³ and is intended to stimulate further research in this area. More specifically, this report will identify gaps in the current literature and suggest areas in which more reflection and debate is needed, especially between conflict prevention specialists and feminist advocates and scholars. It will also suggest ways in which EU conflict prevention can improve by moving its gender equality objectives from the periphery to the heart of its activities.

The first section draws on feminist thought to discuss 'gender' and 'gender equality' and then examines what these terms mean for the EU and for EU conflict prevention. The second section provides a feminist analysis of EU foreign policy documents in order to situate EU conflict prevention and 'gender equality' within the broader foreign policy context. These include the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), (European Union External Action Service 2016), the Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Council of the EU 2005), the *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism* (European Commission 2016) and the Joint Communication for a renewed impetus of the

² The Research meets Policy seminar 'A year on: implementing the EU Global Strategy' of 11 September 2017 organised in the framework of the EU CIVCAP project underscored the importance of integrating gender equality and gender analysis to conflict prevention scholarship and practice. The main findings of this report were presented in draft form to a small group of experts in the field of gender equality and the EU at an off-the-record workshop in Brussels on 25 January 2018. The author is grateful to the participants for their insights, which enriched the recommendations. She is also grateful for substantial input from Ana E. Juncos, Terri Beswick, Nabila Habbida and Sari Kouvo on an earlier draft. This report does not represent the views of EPLO or its members and remains the sole responsibility of the author.

³ For an overview of the gender analysis of a limited number of EU policy areas, not including conflict prevention, see Kronsell (2016a, p.105). There is a more substantial post-colonial literature on the EU, which is also relevant to this paper. For a discussion, see Stern (2011), Fisher Onar and Nicolaidis (2013).

Africa-EU Partnership (European Commission and HRVP CFSP 2017). Situating conflict prevention and gender equality within a feminist analysis of EU foreign policy, and conflict prevention policies, is necessary as pursuing even inclusive gender equality objectives at the level of specific policies and/or within specific EU conflict prevention bodies may be directly at odds with a feminist agenda (Peto & Manners, 2006). Feminist analysis of broader policy objectives may require a fundamental re-think of what kind of foreign policy the EU should pursue, and how. This includes and goes beyond the goals of gender equality, however 'gender equality' may be understood. In particular, this report focuses on EU conflict prevention, both at the macro-level (what should the EU be doing in the world and how) and at the micro-level (how we analyse a specific conflict). In the conclusion, the report identifies key dilemmas for further research and reflection and offers some recommendations for conflict prevention advocates and scholars.

1. WHOSE EQUALITY? GENDER AND GENDER EQUALITY

Intersectional feminism and gender equality

Feminist thinking on sex and gender gathered pace throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rubin broke new ground in separating sex – whether a body is male or female – from gender – the historically, culturally, politically and economically constructed meanings of being a man or being a woman (Rubin, 1975). These constructs form a gender hierarchy: “sex is not unequal; gender, the social meaning of sex, is” (MacKinnon, 2017, p.316)⁴ However the sex/gender system assumed, for many, that White, Western, heterosexual, middle-class experience of womanhood was universal in opposition to masculine hegemonic power. Feminisms needed to include and address differences of race, class, sexuality, age and (dis)ability (see for example, Mohanty, 1991; Haraway, 1991) leading to more inclusive, or intersectional, understandings of gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality can be understood as the different ways in which social divisions, such as class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, ability, age combine to create differential access to economic, political and cultural resources, bearing in mind that we can't assume the same constellation or effect in each case as each will be dependent on specific social, economic and political processes (Yuval-Davis, 2006). As Yuval-Davis points out, not all differences are the same or have universal application; some have more power than others and the ability to provide differential access to resources. Understanding how power flows through intersectional gendered relations is therefore central to understanding access to power and resources (2006).

Following Yuval-Davis, intersectional feminism provides a useful analytical framework when analysing gender equality and conflict prevention for two reasons. Firstly, it recognises, and is inclusive of, the range of gender identities beyond the heterosexual, as sexual and gender minorities are still too often excluded from gender analysis and peacebuilding.⁵ Secondly, it underscores the

⁴ See Kouvo (2014, p.150-170) for a more detailed summary of the main literature.

⁵ A notable exception is Myrntinen and Daigle (2017).

context specificity of and the power relations between the interlinked nature of gender divisions with other social divisions, and the irreducibility of these divisions. Conflict specificity is also considered central to good conflict prevention (see discussion below). Just as there is no universal experience of womanhood, there cannot be a uniform women's experience of conflict and no single women's narrative of what the conflict is about and how it may be addressed (O'Rourke 2014).

The final element of our approach draws on the intersectional feminism discussed above and the 'newly visible meta-injustice... *misframing*', which happens when 'the state-territorial frame is imposed on transnational sources of injustice.' (Fraser, 2010, p.114). For our purposes, the concept of misframing is useful for identifying risks that initiatives to promote gender equality within the foreign policy apparatus of the EU acts creates divisions between European and Other women (and men), the supposed beneficiaries of EU conflict prevention, and so replicates injustice.⁶

The following section situates conflict prevention within a feminist analysis of EU foreign policy more broadly and of specific conflict prevention policies. We cannot assume that EU engagement in conflict prevention is neutral, let alone beneficial, in relation to gender equality. This analysis will reveal gendered dynamics of EU conflict prevention and provide the context for gender equality policies, such as EU commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda (Council of the EU 2008).

2. A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF EU FOREIGN POLICY

This section analyses a sample of key EU foreign policy documents⁷ to reveal how the EU perceives its role in the world, including places where the EU also seeks to prevent conflict. This analysis will set the ground for a more detailed examination of the EU's conflict prevention in the following section.

Gendered perceptions of the EU foreign policy

"Gender equality" for the EU began with the workplace and has evolved since.⁸ Recent scholarship identifies a general 'persistent invisibility of gender' in and across EU policies and institutions (Werner and Heather MacRae 2014). Nonetheless, the EU perceives itself as a champion of gender equality beyond its borders. In the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), "equality" – which would presumably include gender equality – is one of "our values" referred to in the statement: "Living up consistently to our values internally will determine our external credibility and influence" (European Union

⁶ Feminism and gender equality are not the same. The (common) assumption that a female HR/VP or other official will pursue more feminist or egalitarian foreign policy than a man in the same position, or that a gender-balanced CSDP mission (for example) would pursue more feminist or egalitarian objectives, fundamentally misunderstands both feminism and institutional theory.

⁷ The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) (European Union External Action Service 2016), the Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Council of the EU 2005), the *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism* (European Commission 2016) and the Joint Communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership (European Commission and HRVP CFSP 2017).

⁸ See Woollard (2017) for an overview of this process.

External Action Service 2016, 15). The *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism* states: “The EU stands for societies in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women prevail” (European Commission 2016, 11). This latter policy misquotes Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which states that “equality between women and men” is a founding value of the EU (European Union 2012a, Art. 2). This is an explicitly binary representation of gender, and of women and men. It excludes people with non-binary gender identities, and the positioning of women and men suggests and reinforces heterosexual hegemony. Other gender identities are excluded. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation (Article 21). At the UN, *gender* has been “defanged” (Charlesworth, 2005, p.16): synonymous with *women* and limited to a patriarchal, heteronormative and monolithic understanding of Woman, from which all power, critical or political potential has been stripped (Charlesworth 2005, Peto and Manners 2006, Kouvo 2014). This would appear to have been replicated within the EU.

External and internal perceptions of the EU as a foreign policy actor are highly gendered, even if these gender representations are rarely sufficiently analysed: “Americans are from Mars, Europeans from Venus” according to Kagan, (2003), the EU is “the metrosexual superpower” for Khanna (2009). The stereotype is of the EU as soft, civilian, feminine (or urban masculine), choosing persuasion over coercion in dealing with those who might penetrate her delicate borders: She/the EU is weak, and will remain so until she/the EU is able to develop a hard, masculine, militarised identity.

President Juncker recently characterised permanent structured cooperation in defence (PESCO) as “the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty” (European Commission, 2017). Quite who or what played the role of Prince Charming (the European defence industry, perhaps) and who assaults Sleeping Beauty, an unconscious and supremely passive being who has been bewitched/drugged to fall in love with her attacker on waking, is not clear. Nonetheless, the image prevails of Europe/Europa, as a weak, passive, civilian, civilised (White) woman who wishes to “do good,” waking up to the “needs” of a man’s hard security world.

1. From the European Security Strategy to the EU Global Strategy

Maria Stern analysed the gender and colonial tropes of the European Security Strategy (ESS) *A secure Europe in a better World* (European Council, 2003), concluding that the EU acts as a “civilising patriarch”, that aims “to civilise barbaric Others through, at best, example, and at worst, force” (Stern, 2011, p. 50). In 2016, the EU launched the EUGS, titled *Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe* to replace the ESS, dropping the ESS’s ambition of a ‘better world’ for that of a ‘stronger Europe’. Following Stern, the analysis of the document reveals a more exclusive, patriarchal and Othering foreign policy than that envisaged in 2003. The EUGS focuses on hard security to protect (explicitly) EU citizens, particularly from terrorism within the Union and from dangers emanating from Europe’s (Southern) neighbourhood, and to support the EU “defence community.” The primary and intertwined priorities of EU foreign policy are now preventing or countering violent extremism, counter-terrorism and stemming migration into the EU.

In its final version, the EUGS includes several brief references to both “gender” and “women.”⁹ It

⁹ Earlier versions reportedly did not include any references to either.

acknowledges the “multiple dimensions [of conflicts] – from security to gender, from governance to the economy” (European Union External Action Service, 2016, p. 28). There is no elaboration on what a “gender dimension” to conflict might be as an isolated subject of analysis. However, separating gender from security, governance, and the economy, arguably the most important ways in which people organise and are organised, the gendered power relations inherent within and across each of these are therefore dismissed.

The few references to ‘women’ that appear in the text are also illuminating. For instance, the EUGS refers to “thousands of men and women serving under the European flag for peace and security” (p. 4) in civilian and military Common Security and Defence Policy missions around the world. European women here are active, if subordinated to male colleagues, in masculine hard-security roles. The EUGS also states that the participation of (European) women in foreign policy making will be strengthened (p. 48). The EU will develop more “creative approaches to diplomacy”, which will include “promoting the role of women in peace efforts – from implementing the UNSC Resolution [sic] on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU’s internal gender balance” (p. 31). It also commits to “systematically mainstream human rights and gender issues across policy sectors and institutions” (p. 51). The women referenced here are professional, middle-class, predominantly White European women; the participation of Other women in peace processes, whether they are stakeholders in the conflict and its resolution or experts from other parts of the world, is overlooked and excluded. The EUGS seeks to empower European women in peace making efforts, but not Other women. Not only does this deny Other women the opportunities extended to European women but it risks essentialising European women’s participation. This may then be taken to represent the universal Woman and used as cover to deny Other women’s participation and agency.

Other women in the EUGS are passive recipients of aid, often lumped together with youth: “decent work opportunities, notably for women and youth” (p. 26) and with children: “We will significantly step up our humanitarian efforts ... focusing on education, women and children” (p. 27). While the (potential) agency of European women is partially recognised within a masculinised security apparatus, Other women are infantilised, vulnerable, weak and passive recipients of European largesse. Other young men and young women, boys and girls are ungendered and passive recipients. Men are not mentioned; their agency is taken for granted throughout.

2. Countering Terror and violent extremism

Counter-terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism are increasingly dominant policy areas within and beyond the EU. The Counter Terrorism Strategy (Council of the EU, 2005) is completely gender blind: women, men and gender are simply not mentioned.

The more recent European Commission’s *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism* does not mention gender, but refers to (Other) women twice. In the first instance, Other women are instrumental – the EC should help empower women, whatever that might mean, as a way to reduce radicalisation, rather than as an end in itself. The potential for agency is there – Other women may prevent radicalisation, if empowered to do so by the EC. The second places women and very young children as passive victims of radical ideology, suggesting that they share inherent characteristics that differentiate them from men. The potential for agency is also present here, although in this case as a threat. Other women and (presumably)

their children may become radicalised, and so move from passivity to agency. In both cases, agency requires an external, masculinised actor, either for good (EC) or ill (radical ideologue). In contrast to the passivity and absence of Other women’s agency in EU P/CVE and CT documents, violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State have “highly gendered recruitment policies that offer different women specific opportunities and recognise their agency” (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, 2017, p. 2).

In the public and policy imagination, the assumptions underpinning CT and P/CVE policies are heavily gendered – the terrorist/radical extremist is a young, male, Brown or Black Muslim – but lack an evidence base. The EC-funded Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), for example, does not integrate gender analysis into its work and does not appear to have produced a distinct analysis of how gender functions and intertwines with radicalisation or its causes (Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), 2018). To counter violence, initiatives must be based on adequate context analysis that understands why and how different men and different women chose to join violent groups, and why others choose non-violence. The assumptions of female passivity and victimhood and the idea that women’s power is somehow “hidden” lead to poor context analysis that surely misinforms subsequent decisions.

3. The Joint Communication for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership (2017)

Within the *Joint Communication’s* priority to “prevent conflict, address crises and peacebuilding” (European Commission and HRVP CFSP, 2017, p. 7), the emphasis is firmly placed on protecting EU security interests, over those of the African populations. The response that follows is driven by a hard-security approach that concentrates on building up state capacities for hard security, and presumably security of regime rather than necessarily safety of the population, even if the document cites the African vision in *Agenda 2063* for development that “is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its youth – in particular young women – and leaving no one behind” (p. 6).

The priority “Strengthening governance systems” identifies strong, democratic institutions as a measure of resilience, rather than the meaningful participation of all citizens: institutions are likely to replicate and reinforce multiple patterns of exclusion. “[T]he involvement of youth and women in formal political processes will increase trust in state institutions (p. 9).” This reference infantilises and instrumentalises women: Women’s (and “youth”) “involvement” is to increase public trust in state institutions. There is no requirement for state institutions to reform and deliver women’s and young people’s (diverse) interests. There is no sense that it is right that women and youth – as a majority of the population – should be “involved” at the very least. The sub-text is that men’s power including through the institutions is assumed. Women and youth need to feel involved so that they deliver public trust – acquiesce to the system rather than the system change to meet their needs. The proposed remedy is “[d]eepening the empowerment of women, youth as well as vulnerable people, through targeted programmes fostering their participation in decision making processes...” (p. 11). “Vulnerable people” are not defined, but they along with women and youth are, collectively, weak bodies held back by their lack of empowerment. The onus is on these weak bodies to become empowered, with the help of the EU, to include themselves, to assert their agency and end their own exclusion. At no point must the institutions reform exclusive policies and practices.

The same section in the Joint Communication also includes support for broadening civic space. This is particularly important for women and sexual and gender minorities as their civic space shrinks far more quickly than elite male civic space. However, the section on governance is subordinated to security and security concerns – often connected to migration, the third priority –, which are an important excuse for reducing civic space. The section on migration and mobility makes no reference to the highly gendered opportunities for mobility and patterns of migration, an oversight that underscores the limits of integrating gender analysis, however superficial.

Gendered foreign policy

This section has demonstrated how highly gendered EU foreign policy is. Europe is weak, soft, feminine, in need of militarisation to be able to project military/brute force in areas where conflict and/or radicalisation may threaten European security. Foreign policy has become increasingly othering; the emphasis is now on protecting Europeans within Europe from security threats from barbaric Others. This is a significant break with the rhetoric of exporting values of a decade ago.

Other women are understood as weak, vulnerable, infantilised and passive recipients of aid. They have no agency, but with masculine intervention, they may be instrumentalised to prevent or further violent extremism. European women are encouraged to participate in projecting Europe's force. The agency of European and Other men and boys is assumed – invisible and omnipotent. SGM are invisible and excluded. This is the political climate in which EU commitments to gender equality in conflict prevention must be analysed.

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND EU CONFLICT PREVENTION

We cannot assume that EU conflict prevention is neutral, let alone beneficial, in relation to gender equality. After all, “structural violence against women and girls is not considered a root cause [of conflict], despite its prevalence, revealing perhaps a critical blind spot in EU understanding of conflict” (Davis et al, 2017, p.10). While the previous two sections presented the EU's understanding of ‘gender equality’ and the way gender equality is reflected (or not) in EU discourses, this section examines how the EU's commitments to gender equality and the WPS agenda are reflected in EU conflict prevention policy and practice.

The EU and Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The WPS Agenda is based on a set of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), starting with UNSCR 1325 in 2000.¹⁰ These UNSCRs on WPS have focused on the need for women's participation, in different forms, in some aspects of peace and security (O'Rourke, 2014), and they have underscored the criminal rather than inevitable nature of harms, particularly sexual violence, inflicted on women and girls during conflict. The UNSCRs on WPS, and the National Action Plans that result from them have also provided a much-needed platform for women and women's

¹⁰ They are: UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).

organisations to voice their opinions and space for activism far from New York (Otto, 2010). Yet women and girls still suffer extensive human rights violations, including sexual violence. They are still largely excluded from leadership in public life more generally (Fraser, 2010; Phipps, 2014), particularly in relation to questions of security, war and peace, with serious limitations to the “participation” envisaged by the WPS agenda (O'Rourke, 2014) and gender mainstreaming remains a challenge (Charlesworth, 2005).

The EU adopted its *Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security* (henceforth: CA 1325) in 2008 (Council of the EU, 2008). Although the WPS agenda focuses on women and women’s participation, and excludes sexual and gender minorities (Myrntinen & Daigle, 2017), the CA 1325 defines gender as

“the socially constructed differences, as opposed to the biological ones, between women and men ... It is important to note that gender is not only about women, but about gender roles of both sexes, and that a gender perspective thereby also concerns the role of men” (Council of the EU, 2008, p. 5).

By this definition, men and boys are included in ‘gender’ but the power dynamics in the relationships across and between different gender identities are not.

The Comprehensive Approach to 1325 is a detailed document, laying out how the WPS agenda should be integrated into the EU’s external action, including a set of benchmarks. Three reports on implementing the Comprehensive Approach to 1325 have been published to date. The second implementation report noted several achievements most of which related to improving the EU’s internal gender balance (Council of the EU, 2014, p. 4).

The reports identify difficulties in getting data regarding the implementation of CA 1325. There are consistently low response rates from Delegations: 53% for 2010-2012; 42% 2013-2015 (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 9), and EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), suggesting that CA 1325 is a low priority, that compliance with reporting requirements is not enforced by the hierarchy, and that resistance from officials is tolerated. The consistent 100% response rate from CSDP missions underscores the importance of enforcing the implementation of policy, including reporting.¹¹

The main focus of the implementation reports is on internal EU measures, including the gender balance in peace and security posts. The percentage of women senior managers has remained constant at 14% between 2013 and 2015, while the percentage of women Heads of Delegation has fallen from 23% to 20% (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 13). The 2017 report explains: “The challenge is to encourage female candidates, including from Member States, to apply for the function of EU Head of Delegation (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 13). The same report explains that 21% of applicants for Head of Delegation positions were women (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 13). Although a 21% female application rate is in itself cause for concern, there is no *prima facie* reason why a 21% application rate could not lead to, say, 75% of new appointees being women. The report places the

¹¹ CSDP’s more military style of management than the other EU bodies covered in the reports, plus the small number of CSDP missions in comparison to EC programmes and EU Delegations, for example, accounts for the 100% response rate.

responsibility on women to apply and not on the structures to consider why there is such a low application/appointment rate: the under-represented must ensure they participate fully; but there is no need for institutions to reform to ensure equitable participation. The same report cites the example of Finland, which increased its percentage of female diplomatic Heads of Mission from 5% to 46% (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 17), but without mentioning Finland's policy of seeking, recruiting and promoting women candidates.

The 2017 report lists a series of initiatives the EU undertakes with partner countries, civil society, international organisations and with peace processes to further the WPS agenda. The Directorate-General for Development (DEVCO) also has a Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II) which produces reports (see below). In the CA 1325 and GAP II reports, there are frequent references to sexual violence. We have seen how passive Other women are in policy, and the consistent absence of men and boys from policy documents. This is particularly problematic given the prevalence of references to sexual violence. Women and girls are identified as the primary – or only – victims of sexual and gender-based violence. This becomes the dominant 'women's issue'. Male victims are ignored. The overwhelmingly male perpetrators are invisible, which diminishes their culpability. Without detracting from the harm victims and survivors suffer, framing policies around female victimhood in this way perpetuates racist and colonial images of the weak, constrained, and vulnerable – and, in this case, sexualised – Other women. Victim subject politics like these deny women's agency and feed conservative and protectionist rather than liberating responses (Kapur, 2002). The positioning of Other women and girls as primarily victims of sexual violence exacerbates this risk.

In the aforementioned EU documents, women and girls are presented as victims of sexual violence, and it is their protection and assistance *after* sexual violence that is the focus of these policies. Women's and girls' experience of other human rights violations are largely overlooked, as are their experiences of other forms of gender-based violence, especially economic violence and the curtailment of their enjoyment of their human rights. The policy focus is on treating female victims of sexual violence rather than on prevention, which would require addressing the power imbalances in gender relations that produce the enabling environment for sexual and gender-based violence (see for example, Kapur, 2002; Phipps, 2014).

The extensive literature on WPS points to both its importance for women's engagement, and the patterns of exclusions it enables, both in terms of what women can participate in, and how they can participate (see for example: Otto 2010, O'Rourke 2014, Myrtilinen and Daigle 2017). Moreover, there is important work to be done in assessing how EU supported initiatives contribute to addressing gendered power relationships in conflict-affected areas, and whether/how they promote gender equality in participation in decision-making related to peace and security. The CA 1325 implementation reports give no indication of impact of initiatives EU bodies undertake either directly or through partnership to facilitate gender equality. We have no clear idea, even in general terms, whether, to what extent and how EU support to WPS is enabling greater gender equality both within EU structures and in its engagement in conflict-affected situations. We cannot assume this impact to be positive. For instance, an evaluation of EU support to gender equality and women's empowerment in partner countries – a much broader scope than conflict prevention – found that the EU does not deliver on its gender equality commitments because it does not allocate the necessary resources (time, priority, leadership, money) to do so (Watkins et al, 2015). The same

report also concluded that the EU does not have in place accountability measures to enforce implementation of its commitments to gender equality (Watkins et al, 2015). When it comes to EU support for exclusively WPS activities, the report states that it is hard to identify because “the EU mainstreams a gender equality approach in its policies and activities, especially in the context of crisis management and in its development cooperation” (Council of the EU, 2017, p. 22). However, the challenges of gender mainstreaming are significant (Charlesworth, 2005; Kouvo, 2014).

Gender equality and EU conflict prevention policy

This section considers ‘gender equality’ and WPS-related provisions in broader conflict prevention policy. Before doing so, it is necessary to note three developments that have a bearing on this discussion. The first is that the GAP II was adopted in 2015 to measure how the EU delivers on: ensuring girls’ and women’s physical and psychological integrity; promoting the social and economic rights / empowerment of women and girls; strengthening girls’ and women’s voice and participation; and shifting the Institutional Culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments (Council of the EU, 2015). This is closely related to CA 1325, even if GAP II sits in DEVCO and CA 1325 with the EEAS. GAP II does not disaggregate data by fragility, so direct comparison with CA 1325 is difficult. The second development to consider is the creation of the position of the Principal Adviser on Gender and UNSCR 1325/WPS (PAG) to the EEAS. The PAG’s mandate is not clear, but the position has a coordinating function between the different EU bodies, for which it is inadequately resourced as the team comprises the PAG and one expert.

Thirdly, the EU has adopted guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons (Council of the EU, 2013). These might provide an entry point for addressing some of the assumptions underpinning the EU’s approach to WPS. For the critics who will claim that it is impossible in Other societies to promote gender inclusivity, the guidelines allow for EU actors to adapt their approaches to the context; they do not allow for LGBTI to be ignored and certainly not excluded. However, as with other aspects of gender equality, observers should be vigilant that it is indeed the host country that resists gender equality, as we cannot assume that Delegations and EUSRs are promoting gender equality, resistance is likely from within the EU system. A recent report found that personal engagement by individual officials in Delegations was critical for the implementation, or not, of the guidelines, and that 70% of LGBTIQ organisations surveyed across the world felt the local EU Delegation had missed opportunities to implement the guidelines (Cornelissen & Hammelburg, 2016, p.38). How and whether the EU implements these guidelines in conflict-affected situations and so contributes to gender equality in EU conflict prevention merits further research.

“Gender” is one of the key cross-cutting issues that the Council commits to integrate better into conflict prevention in the *Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention* (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 2). But in the list of achievements since the Gothenburg Programme (2001), which the Council endorses as the basis for EU conflict prevention, CA 1325 is missing as this was adopted more than a decade later and thus the Gothenburg Programme is gender blind.

For its part, the *Joint Communication: A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s external action* sets out how to prevent conflict by developing resilience at the level of states, societies,

communities and individuals, and between these levels. The *Communication* places heavy emphasis on inclusion, participation, and accountability: resilience is about how individuals, communities and states adapt to pressure, and manage risk and opportunity. The power relationships between individuals, population groups, communities, social and formal institutions is therefore at the heart of resilience. So too, therefore, is gender.

The *Communication* acknowledges that “shortcomings in ... gender equality” amongst others “pose a fundamental challenge to the effectiveness of any society’s development efforts” (European Commission and High Representative , 2017, p. 4), yet the only place in the document where gender equality is taken up is in the annex. The fourth of ten “guiding considerations for a strategic approach to resilience” is “Identifying and building upon existing positive sources of resilience is as important as tracking and responding to vulnerabilities.” The last lines of this consideration state:

“Local governments and civil society are often the basis on which resilience can take root and grow at community level. Women have a specific and essential role that needs to be recognised and acted upon, while addressing the structural causes of gender inequality.” (European Commission and High Representative , 2017, p. 23).

Although gender inequality is identified as an obstacle to resilience, women have an “essential role”. This sounds like the ‘natural peacemaker’ trope, as this role is apparently restricted to the community level rather than to the corridors of power. “Addressing structural causes of gender inequality” is not elaborated upon in the text. It is also not mentioned where the Joint Communication states that “[r]esilience is about transformation and not preserving the status quo”, despite the fact that “addressing structural causes of gender inequality” means disrupting exclusive and gendered forms of acquiring, maintaining and exercising power at all levels of society, not only at the community level.

The section “Resilience in practice – understanding the gender dimension, an example from conflict and disaster policy” demonstrates how toothless ‘gender’ is in the *Joint Communication*. This starts by recognising that different gender groups experience conflict, climate change and disasters differently, and that this needs to be incorporated into any analysis. Patriarchal social norms are at play and these may be reinforced or disrupted (European Commission and High Representative , 2017, p. 7). The need for gender analysis and the recognition that patriarchal social norms are often present, dynamic and not essential to a particular culture are crucial points that appear too rarely in policy documents. The following paragraphs are deeply problematic, however. “Gender” is immediately reduced to “women and girls” (“equality” is only mentioned in annex, see above) despite the reference to patriarchal norms in the previous paragraph:

Women and girls can also play an active and important role in contributing to societal resilience that can underpin peace. Ensuring that women and girls are well informed and actively participate in peace building and recovery efforts not only ensures that their specific needs and capacities are taken into consideration, but can also create a window of opportunity for social change, by challenging traditional gender roles and gender-based discrimination. This is a further factor of societal resilience, and can ensure more suitable and sustainable outcomes for EU-supported work (European Commission and High Representative , 2017, p. 8).

Other women's and girls' *partial* agency is acknowledged: "can play", rather than "play" "an active...role" in the singular, not the plural, suggesting the need for an external, masculinised catalyst. The fault for their passivity lies with them: they are not well-informed and do not actively participate. They need to take action, including, specifically to "challeng[e] traditional gender roles and gender-based discrimination." On this reading, it is specifically the fault of Other women's passivity that leads to their exclusion, and therefore the patriarchal social norms of the previous sentence. There is no requirement for action on the part of men and boys, community, state and social leaders and the institutions they control to address these norms or patterns of exclusion. This is, apparently, the "gender dimension" that needs "strengthening" (European Commission and High Representative, 2017, p. 8). The purpose is instrumental - to enable "more suitable and sustainable outcomes for EU-supported work" - rather than an end in itself.

The *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* opens to the tune of the EUGS by explaining that the Integrated Approach is intended to "promote human security and thereby increase the security of the EU and its citizens" (Council of the EU, 2018, p. 2). The safety of Others is important insofar as this affects the security of Europe and Europeans. "The Council underlines the key role of women, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security, and youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding" (p. 3). Women and youth are again lumped together in a formulaic reference. There are no references to gender equality or structural violence against women and SGM. The nine-page document gives a reasonably detailed account of what the Integrated Approach entails, yet gender, gender analysis and gender equality are absent. If these were routinely integrated across policy, we might assume these to be included in the references to conflict analysis and protection of human rights. However, as they are not, we can only surmise that gender equality has been excluded from the Integrated Approach.

Turning to practice-oriented documents, the EU's *Guidance Note on the use of Conflict Analysis in support of EU external action* (EEAS and European Commission nd) makes no mention of gender or women, even though it includes a detailed section on conflict-sensitive political economy analysis which "takes particular account of the interests and incentives driving the behaviour of different groups and individuals, the distribution of power and wealth between them, and how these relationships are created, sustained and transformed over time. These relationships are crucial in explaining how politics works, how wealth is created, and how change happens" (EEAS and European Commission nd, 7). Yet, this overlooks gender issues as it does not specifically refer to the need to incorporate a gender analysis. Gendered power relations and women's powers and agencies remain 'hidden' from the Western male gaze that chooses not to look for them. Any form of conflict analysis (including political economy analysis) that overlooks gender relations can only be partial and therefore not conflict-sensitive. Moreover, CA 1325 is omitted from the annex of key EU policy commitments on which the guidance note draws, underscoring its exceptional, marginal character.

Finally, the *Factsheet: EU Conflict Early Warning Analysis* (EEAS 2014) does not reference gender analysis either, and relies on the conflict analysis guidance note. However, a project between Saferworld and Conciliation Resources is currently developing the capacities of Delegations to incorporate gender analysis into conflict analysis.

This section has demonstrated the limits of EU 'gender equality' and how even this limited understanding of the concept has not influenced key conflict prevention policies. The *Thematic*

Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace-building, for example, does not address gender or WPS commitments in any way, other than to list CA 1325 as one of the policy areas contributing to the *Comprehensive Approach to Conflict Prevention* that the evaluation was assessing (ADE, 2011). Structural violence against women and girls and structural gender inequality are not systemically included as root causes of conflict. Even when the importance of gender analysis is acknowledged, as in the Joint Communication on Resilience, this is not translated into priorities for action.

This analysis of key conflict prevention policy areas raises significant concerns. As with the foreign policy documents analysed in section 2, Other women are vulnerable and passive. Their agency is partial, requires catalysis, and is restricted to the community level. Women are homogenous. Those excluded need to take action to include themselves in exclusive systems, on which there is no onus to reform. Men and boys remain invisibly omnipotent; sexual and gender minorities are invisible and ignored.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has demonstrated that gender equality is not integrated into EU conflict prevention policies, despite the EU's commitments to the WPS agenda. Conflict prevention policy cannot be assumed to be neutral in regard to gender equality: it is situated within a highly gendered foreign policy that we have demonstrated to be patriarchal and Othering. Men are invisible – their agency is taken for granted throughout. Male victims of violence are ignored. Outside Europe, the agency of Other women may be triggered by a masculine external intervention to prevent radicalisation, to future radicalisation or to promote resilience at community level. Generally, however, Other women are weak, vulnerable, infantilised and instrumentalised recipients of European aid. Sexual and gender minorities are invisible and excluded. This is the foreign policy context for EU conflict prevention.

Within this context, “gender equality” has been limited and stripped of power. At its most inclusive, the EU's use of “gender” has been reduced to mean women and men within the heteronormative hegemony, excluding therefore the range of gender identities that do not conform, but is most usually used as a synonym for “women and girls”. Importantly, “gender” has been emptied of the inherent power relationships between different gender identities and different social divisions, such as race, ethnicity and class, across and between individuals, communities, social and formal institutions that lead to differentiated access to power and resources.

Part of the EU's WPS commitments are to mainstream gender equality considerations across its external action. This has clearly not happened, and there is no cause for hope in the near future. The CA 1325 is already 10 years old, and despite significant developments in EU foreign and conflict prevention policy during the past decade, there is no plan to update it. The Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach (Council of the EU 2018) flaunt the truth in plain sight: gender considerations belong in the WPS agenda box.

Gender equality or ‘WPS-related’ concerns have not been considered, let alone addressed, in EU conflict prevention policies. These are therefore **gender-blind by design and therefore will Do Harm**

even when ‘successful’ by reinforcing existing structural gendered inequalities and dominant (gendered) interests present in the conflict context. Structural gendered inequality is routinely left out of the list of root causes of conflict. For instance, the Joint Communication on Resilience notes how gender inequality is a significant obstacle to resilience yet sidesteps addressing the power imbalances that create and uphold gender inequality. The role of women in peacebuilding and contributing to resilience is essentialised, along the lines of the “woman as natural peacebuilder” cliché, limited to the community level. The idea that different women play multiple roles, have different interests, needs and perspectives in peacebuilding and in conflict is alien. The Council Conclusions of January 2018, does not mention gender at all beyond a formulaic reference to WPS commitments.

Gender analysis is not taken into consideration in the formulation of EU conflict prevention policy or recognised as important. Conflict prevention initiatives will, therefore, reinforce the dominant (gendered) interests in conflicts. Gender equality is understood only as **co-option and conforming to masculinised structures** without requiring the hegemonic power within the system to change. The onus is always on the excluded to become empowered, never on exclusive systems to reform and to meet the interests of the excluded. Improving the internal gender balance of EU conflict prevention practice does not, in itself, bring about greater gender equality in EU conflict prevention.

The WPS agenda has a heavy emphasis on improving the gender balance within the EU peace and security apparatus, yet by its own reporting standards, the EEAS has shown that there is insufficient resourcing for and enforcement of the WPS agenda even to obtain adequate levels of *reporting* from the Delegations and EUSRs. The gender ratio of senior positions remains very poor. The onus is on women to change the balance, not on the system to change to become more inclusive.

There is a critical gap in research that assesses the contribution of EU support to WPS initiatives worldwide to gender equality, and the extent to which gender equality is included in conflict prevention programming in practice. There is broad consensus that the WPS agenda has provided an important platform for women, particularly in conflict areas, to participate in peace and security. However, concerns remain about the extent to which the WPS agenda in general promotes gender equality and how and whether EU support contributes to this. The evidence presented in this paper suggests we cannot assume that the EU delivers on its commitments in this field. Further research into this question is much needed. EU rhetoric would have us believe that gender equality analysis and considerations are integrated into conflict prevention interventions, and that these promote gender equality. But we can kiss it all we like: ‘gender equality’ in EU conflict prevention is just a frog. The WPS agenda has not and will not deliver gender equality commitments across EU conflict prevention policy and practice.

Policy recommendations:

1. Researchers and practitioners should challenge patriarchal assumptions of power in EU foreign policy by developing a body of analysis that identifies the main challenges, entry points and opportunities for change, and clarifies feminist objectives for foreign policy and conflict prevention.
2. Conflict prevention advocates within the EU should work with new alliances to contribute to a broader discussion on the role of the EU in conflict-affected areas, and specifically

developing alliances with feminist scholars and activists to learn from the experiences and viewpoints of non-European feminists, particularly those in conflict-affected areas, and from feminists targeting intra-European policy to inform advocacy on EU foreign policy.

3. Ten years after its adoption in 2008, the EEAS's Principal Advisor on Gender should coordinate a process to revise and update the EU's Comprehensive Approach to UNSCR 1325, emphasizing the importance of promoting gender equality across all foreign policy interventions in conflict-affected situations.
4. Senior management of the EEAS and DEVCO, supported by the peacebuilding/conflict prevention advocacy community (particularly policy-makers, civil society practitioners and scholars) should support a more transformative feminist approach to EU foreign policy in line with core peacebuilding principles by establishing the necessary systems to:
 - analyse the power dynamics inherent in EU conflict prevention policy and practice, at headquarters level and in programming on the ground and the gendered implications of these; and design feedback loops to ensure this learning informs programming;
 - ensure that rigorous gender analysis is integrated into conflict analysis, and that gender equality objectives are moved to the heart of conflict prevention policies and programmes and their implementation is monitored and enforced; and
 - identify and use smarter indicators of success/backsliding than the quick wins associated with counting numbers of women present in institutions.

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