

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The paradox of prevention in the Women, Peace and Security agenda

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Abstract

Prevention is a central pillar of the ‘Women, Peace and Security’ agenda, a policy architecture governing gender and conflict that is anchored in a suite of United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted under the title of ‘Women and Peace and Security’. In this article, I argue that prevention is currently constituted within the WPS agenda in multiple ways, all of which are organised in accordance with different logics: a logic of peace; a logic of militarism; and a logic of security. This presents prevention as a paradox, because in operation it collapses back into a logic of security, even as it is constructed and positioned as security’s temporal and conceptual other. I provide a close reading of the WPS resolutions and show how the articulations of prevention across the agenda, and in certain resolutions, operate according to logics of security and militarism. The significance of such an argument is twofold: it lies both in the possibility of reconstruction of prevention in the WPS agenda according to different logics, and in the potential of undoing security – as the manifestation of prevention in practice – in queer, feminist, decolonial, and posthuman ways of knowing and encountering the world.

Keywords: Violence; Prevention; Security; United Nations; the Women; Peace; Security Agenda

Introduction

This article examines the discursive construction of prevention in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda, as it has become known, derives from the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in the year 2000; this resolution was the first in the sequence of ten resolutions adopted by the Council under the title of ‘Women and Peace and Security’. UNSCR 1325 is frequently described as a ‘watershed’ or ‘landmark’ moment in the international peace and security governance apparatus.¹ The resolution is highly significant not only because it represented the first time the Council had debated the gendered effects of conflict and the gendered exclusions in conflict prevention and resolution but also because of the resolution’s co-production by representatives of UN member states, UN officials, and civil society practitioners and advocates.² The overarching principles of the WPS agenda are usually grouped

¹See Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007); Carol Cohn, ‘Mainstreaming gender in UN security policy: A path to political transformation’, in Shirin M. Rai and Georgina Waylen (eds), *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 185–206.

²See Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, ‘Civil society’s leadership in adopting 1325 Resolution’, in Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 38–53, for a full discussion of the adoption of Resolution 1325 and the role of civil society; on the contested development of the WPS agenda and its resolutions, see Dianne Otto, ‘Women, Peace, and Security: A critical analysis of the Security Council’s vision’, in Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Naomi Cahn, Dina Francesca Haynes, and Nahla Valji (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and*

into ‘pillars’, of which there are four: (1) the *participation* of women in peace and security governance; (2) the *protection* of women’s rights and bodies in conflict and postconflict environment; (3) the *prevention* of violence, which is the focus of the present investigation; and (4) *relief and recovery*, which involves gender-sensitive humanitarian programming in the wake of disasters and complex emergencies, as well as the inclusion of women in postconflict reconstruction.

This research engages the ‘prevention’ pillar, which has been called the ‘weakest “P” in the 1325 pod’.³ The dynamics of prevention have been widely contested in scholarship on WPS, not least in regard to Resolution 2242, which purports to offer a new articulation of prevention in its focus on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism. This investigation is driven by a central puzzle related to the construction of prevention in the WPS agenda; the questions that animate the study presented here are: first, *how is prevention constituted in the policy architecture of the WPS agenda?*, and, second, *what are the effects of having prevention thus constituted?* I argue that an examination of prevention in the Women, Peace and Security agenda reveals its paradoxical construction: prevention is constituted as something other than (military) security but it is governed by dominant logics of security and militarism. This insight provides a useful complement to existing scholarship on prevention as a technique of governmentality, as analysts can better understand the effects and affordances of prevention when it is shown that prevention is not only constructed through an anticipatory logic of security but also through a logic of militarism, both of which dominate the subordinate logic of peace that is also evident in the construction of prevention in the WPS agenda. The organisation of prevention discourse in accordance with these logics, and the ways in which these logics are constituted, is discussed further below. I further contend that recognising prevention as a paradox, as a concept that is constituted within the contemporary system of security governance by logics of its own inhibition, forces ever greater scrutiny towards the concept of security we use to think with, as well as opening up the possibility of reproducing prevention in the WPS agenda according to different logics, or elevating the logic of peace that I identify.

I develop this argument in three sections. In the first section, I briefly review research on prevention, putting this literature into conversation with broader literatures on the governance of peace and security, to develop an argument about the performative and constitutive effects of governance practices in the domain of peace, security, and prevention. Specifically, I engage with scholarship on the governmentality of prevention. Second, I outline how it is possible to excavate logics (in this case, logics of peace, militarism, and security) through discourse analysis applied to texts (in this case, the WPS resolutions with which I am working), and briefly discuss the possibilities and limitations of this methodology. In the third section I develop the argument that prevention is constructed in the WPS agenda such that it represents a paradox. I examine the ten current WPS resolutions to draw out the constructions of prevention in the primary policy architecture of the WPS agenda. I show how the prevention pillar is manifested through unstable and sometimes contradictory articulations of prevention itself. I present a close reading of the resolutions, to show how the dominant constructions of prevention in the resolutions relies on logics of militarism and security, which then bring into play the state-based, masculinised, and violence-prone ideas and ideals for which conventional militarised/security discourse is widely critiqued.⁴ In conclusion, I propose that the critical potential of such an argument lies both in

Conflict (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 105–19; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Nahla Valji, ‘Scholarly debates and contested meanings of WPS’, in Davies and True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, pp. 53–67.

³Soumita Basu and Catia C. Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod? Realizing conflict prevention through Security Council Resolution 1325’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 18:1 (2017), pp. 43–63.

⁴See, among many others, Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women’s Lives* (London: Pluto, 1983); Marysia Zalewski, ‘Well, what is the feminist perspective on Bosnia’, *International Affairs*, 71:2 (1995), pp. 339–56; Iris Marion Young, ‘The logic of masculinist protection: Reflections on the current security state’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29:1 (2003), pp. 1–25; Carol Cohn, ‘Mainstreaming gender in UN security policy: A path to political transformation’, in Rai and Waylen (eds), *Global Governance*, pp. 185–206; Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski, ‘Feminist

reconstructing prevention in the WPS agenda according to different, or subordinate, logics and in the potential of undoing *militarism/security* – as the manifestation of prevention in practice – in queer, feminist, decolonial, and posthuman ways of knowing and encountering the world.

Examining the governance of conflict, prevention, and security

This analysis is situated within the broader literature on the governance of peace and security, particularly the critical tradition that explores the productive power of techniques and rationalities pertaining to conflict, prevention, and security.⁵ Deliberate techniques of (bio)power have constitutive effects in terms of their obvious impact on our world(s); the concepts with which we work and think in the realm of conflict, prevention, and security also have such effects. From a perspective that accepts the ontological significance of discourse,⁶ I propose, in line with existing scholarship, that theories and policy prescriptions pertaining to conflict, prevention, and security bring into being particular configurations and operations of power and authority that render certain actions thinkable/permittible while foreclosing the consideration of alternatives. Simply put, the governance of conflict, prevention, and security does not only ‘live’ or occur in the overt expression or application of power and authority – in what we might think of as ‘implementation’ – but its reproduction and the conditions of its legitimacy can also be traced through the discourses that articulate and (at least temporarily stabilise) its various meanings and practices.

The global governance of peace and security has cohered over the last decades in the form of the so-called ‘liberal peace’ paradigm, ‘based on a consensus that democracy, the rule of law and market economies would create sustainable peace in post-conflict and transitional state and societies, and in the larger international order that they were a part of.’⁷ The legitimacy, or otherwise, of the liberal peace has been fiercely contested in scholarly literature on peace and security governance, with the emergence of a robust research agenda that interrogates the ways in which peace interventions ‘tend to reify state sovereignty, fail to address adequately issues related to justice, reconciliation, welfare, and gendered power, and validate “top-down institutional neoliberal and neocolonial” practices’.⁸ Peace and security interventions inform and structure behaviours,

fatigue(s): Reflections on feminism and familiar fables of militarisation’, *Review of International Studies*, 35:3 (2009), pp. 611–30; Linda Åhäll, *Sexing War/Policing Gender: Motherhood, Myth and Women’s Political Violence* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁵See Michael Dillon, ‘The security of governance’, in Wendy Larner and William Walters (eds), *Global Governmentality* (London: Routledge, 2004); Michael Dillon and Lius Lobo-Guerrero, ‘Biopolitics of security in the 21st century: An introduction’, *Review of International Studies*, 34:3 (2008), pp. 265–92; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed, 2001); Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Mark Duffield, ‘The liberal way of development and the development–security impasse: Exploring the global life–chance divide’, *Security Dialogue*, 41:1 (2010), pp. 53–76; Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal Zanotti, ‘Mapping the security–development nexus: Conflict, complexity, cacophony, convergence’, *Security Dialogue*, 41:1 (2010), pp. 5–30.

⁶See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992); David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁷Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, ‘Introduction: The politics of liberal peace’, in Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (eds), *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (London: Zed, 2011), pp. 1–13.

⁸Oliver Richmond, ‘A genealogy of peace and conflict theory’, in Oliver Richmond (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 14–40, 26. See also Roland Paris, ‘Saving liberal peacebuilding’, *Review of International Studies*, 36:2 (2010), pp. 337–65; Jan Selby, ‘The myth of liberal peace-building’, *Conflict, Security and Development*, 13:1 (2013), pp. 57–86; Oliver P. Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Where now for the critique of the liberal peace?’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50:2 (2015), pp. 171–89; Laura McLeod and Maria O’Reilly, ‘Critical peace and conflict studies: Feminist interventions’, *Peacebuilding*, 7:2 (2019), pp. 127–45; Maria O’Reilly, ‘From gendered war to gendered

practices, and the formulation of ‘solutions’ to the ‘problems’ identified in what Séverine Autesserre calls ‘peaceland’, the space of post-conflict peace interventions by international institutions.⁹ Critical literature on peace interventions, postconflict peacebuilding, and development has examined the ways in which the techniques and rationalities associated with peace and security governance are produced by and, productive of, specific configurations of power and thus constitutive of specific forms of subjectivity.¹⁰

Of particular interest here is the ways in which the positioning of prevention as a technique of security governance, seen from this perspective as a set of discursive practices that have material effects in the world, produces subjects, objects, and the relationships between them. The analysis of conflict prevention as a political project, dated back by some to the Congress of Vienna in 1815,¹¹ has tended to focus on ‘what works’ in conflict prevention,¹² rather than asking how prevention discourse functions. There is an emerging literature now, though, that examines – mostly with reference to new policy initiatives aimed at preventing ‘violent extremism’ or related forms of political violence – how prevention discourse produces certain possibilities while excluding others. This body of work situates prevention within the broader discussion of liberal peace and its (bio)political rationalities of governance, arguing, for example, that ‘[g]lobal liberal governance ... responds to the turbulence of emerging political complexes by forming its own emerging strategic complexes as a means of dealing with the instances of violence that the densely mediated policies of the West periodically find unacceptable there or in response to the security threats that they are generally said to pose’.¹³ Prevention is located here within the ‘emerging strategic complex’ or architecture of governmentality aimed at dealing with violence.¹⁴

A particularly noteworthy example of scholarship in this field is work by Charlotte Heath-Kelly on logics of prevention.¹⁵ In line with the above, Heath-Kelly examines prevention discourse in the form of UK counter-terrorism policy and traces a shift in UK Prevention of Terrorism Acts from a criminal justice approach to a ‘regime of risk’.¹⁶ Prevention, in this context, is configured according to logics of pre-emption rather than punishment/deterrence. In a related piece of research, which applies a critical risk perspective to the UK’s PREVENT Strategy and its construction of radicalisation,¹⁷ Heath-Kelly argues that ‘PREVENT actively

⁹Séverine Autesserre, ‘Going micro: Emerging and future peacekeeping research’, *International Peacekeeping*, 21:4 (2004), pp. 492–500.

¹⁰Recent feminist peace research is of particular interest and relevance here; networked and collaborative research attends specifically to everyday forms of violence and insecurity, and the interplay between gendered subjectivity and structures of power. See Annick T. R. Wibben, Catia Cecilia Confortini, Sanam Roohi, Sarai B. Aharoni, Leena Vastapuu, and Tiina Vaittinen, ‘Collective discussion: Piecing-Up feminist peace research’, *International Political Sociology*, 13:1 (2019), pp. 86–107.

¹¹Alice Ackermann, ‘The idea and practice of conflict prevention’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:3 (2003), pp. 339–47.

¹²I do not mean to imply that this research is unimportant or lacking in value, as the opposite is the case. This body of work simply asks different questions than the questions I pursue here. See, for example, Janie Leathermann, Raimo Väyrynen, William Demars, and Patrick Gaffney, *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1999); Fon Osler Hampson and David M. Lamone, *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Chandra Lekha Sriram and Karin Wermester, *From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

¹³Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, ‘Global governance, liberal peace and complex emergency’, *Alternatives*, 25:2 (2000), pp. 117–43.

¹⁴John S. Moolakkattu, ‘The concept and practice of conflict prevention: A critical reappraisal’, *International Studies*, 42:1 (2005), pp. 1–19.

¹⁵Charlotte Heath-Kelly, ‘Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap? False positives in UK terrorism governance and the quest for pre-emption’, *Critical Studies in Terrorism*, 5:1 (2012), pp. 69–87; Charlotte Heath-Kelly, ‘Counter-terrorism and the counterfactual: Producing the “radicalisation” discourse and the UK PREVENT strategy’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 15:4 (2013), pp. 394–415; Charlotte Heath-Kelly, ‘Securing through the failure to secure? The ambiguity of resilience at the bombsite’, *Security Dialogue*, 46:1 (2015), pp. 69–85.

¹⁶Heath-Kelly, ‘Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap?’, p. 71.

¹⁷Heath-Kelly, ‘Counter-terrorism and the counterfactual’, pp. 394–415.

tries to induce specific types of conduct from British Muslim communities while also *securitising* them in terms of “risk”.¹⁸ Thus, prevention discourse is linked to security in terms of its socio-political function in the constitution of subjects: it produces certain subjects that are *securitised*. The subjectivities produced through prevention discourse in the UK, as Heath-Kelly deftly shows, are at once vulnerable and risky, but the *will* to prevent – to govern subjects through discourses of prevention – is itself rendered risky because of the necessarily incomplete knowledge about those subjects that informs prevention decision-making.¹⁹ The partiality of knowledge/power, or ‘gap’, identified by Heath-Kelly in UK prevention discourse is alibied or denied by conventional and sovereign security actions, exemplified in the use of force (Heath-Kelly gives the example of the shooting by London Metropolitan Police of Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005).²⁰ Thus, Heath-Kelly shows how UK prevention discourse is organised in accordance with a logic of security.

Conventional logics of security permit the use of lethal force in service of the state, binding security to the state and its territorial integrity. Within this view, which could be labelled ‘national security’ discourse, ‘states are ... the object to which security policy and practice refers and humans can only be secured to the extent that they are citizens of a given state’.²¹ The insecurities produced by this concept of security is illustrated well by Heath-Kelly’s analysis of the ‘execution-style killing’ of de Menezes, mentioned above.²² Feminist and other critical scholars, of course, have worked to challenge and undermine this narrow envisioning of security for many decades, arguing for a much more expansive conceptualisation that recognises the many ways in which security – and insecurity – functions and manifests. Many examples exist: analysing the leakage of tonnes of methyl isocyanate from a chemical factory owned and operated by the Union Carbide Corporation in the Indian city of Bhopal as an event that threatened the security of thousands in the local area shows how ‘socio-political arrangements’ that marginalise some and privilege others ‘are implicated in the production of threats and injustices’;²³ and ‘everyday insecurity’²⁴ is created through endemic sexual violence in the military – an institution that is notionally intended to *provide* security for populations.²⁵

Given the centrality of security discourse to the state, and the ways in which prevention can be ‘filled’ with an anticipatory logic of security in practice – intertwined as it is with risk and pre-emption, as discussed above – a close analytical scrutiny of the way that security produces political possibilities is essential. There is a wealth of resources available to us if we seek to revise our discourse of security in recognition of its imbrication with prevention; the collective imaginings of creative and undisciplined scholars²⁶ conjure ways of thinking security far greater in potential than the narrow, militarised, material concept of security that haunts the ‘halls of power’, to reappropriate Janet Halley’s phrase.²⁷ Approaches to security that are queer,²⁸

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 396–7, emphasis added.

¹⁹Heath-Kelly, ‘Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap?’, p. 84.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* p. 57.

²²Heath-Kelly, ‘Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap?’.

²³Soumita Basu and João Nunes, ‘Security as emancipation’, in Shepherd (ed.), *Critical Approaches to Security*, pp. 63–4.

²⁴Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 193.

²⁵Megan MacKenzie, *Beyond the Band of Brothers: The US Military and the Myth that Women Can’t Fight* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 66–8; Joane Nagel, ‘Gender, violence and the military’, in Laura J. Shepherd (ed.), *Handbook on Gender and Violence* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019).

²⁶I mean this as a compliment.

²⁷Janet E. Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 21.

²⁸See, among others, Paul Amar, ‘Operation Princess in Rio de Janeiro: Policing “sex trafficking”, strengthening worker citizenship, and the urban geopolitics of security in Brazil’, *Security Dialogue*, 40:4–5 (2009), pp. 513–41; Paul Amar, ‘Turning the gendered politics of the security state inside out? Charging the police with sexual harassment in Egypt’, *International Feminist Journal*

feminist,²⁹ decolonial,³⁰ posthuman,³¹ and those that are as yet unformalised as ‘approaches’ as such,³² offer vivid and potentially transformative figurations of security that could enable those working in service of prevention to realise the promise of a world free – or at least freer – from violence. Such approaches to security would, of course, (re)produce different configurations of power and different constellations of subjects and objects, rendering possible different security actions and security knowledges.

Heath-Kelly and others demonstrate that prevention operates as a technique of governmental-ity, and show, through their careful analysis, the effects of prevention as it is constituted in counter-terrorism discourse. A focus on the biopolitics – and necropolitics³³ – of prevention illuminates the ways in which the concept, when articulated into particular discursive formations, functions to govern, and produce, subjects and the relations between them in particular ways. Frequently, these productive possibilities reinforce the power and authority of the state over the body/life/death of the citizen-subject³⁴ and concretise the effects of constructing prevention in accordance with a logic of risk and pre-emption. In the analysis I present below, I show that prevention is constituted in the WPS agenda in three distinct and different ways: through a logic of security; a logic of militarism; and a (much subordinate) logic of peace. A logic of security *securitises* prevention, in accordance with the narrow conventional understanding that articulates

of Politics, 13:3 (2011), pp. 299–328; Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Jamie J. Hagen, ‘Queering women, peace and security’, *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 313–32; Sandra McEvoy, ‘Queering security studies in Northern Ireland’, in Manuela Lavinias Picq and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2016); Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Empire, desire and violence: A queer transnational feminist reading of the prisoner “abuse” in Abu Ghraib and the question of “gender equality”’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9:1 (2007), pp. 38–59; Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Beyond the erotics of Orientalism: Lawfare, torture and the racial–sexual grammars of legitimate suffering’, *Security Dialogue*, 45:1 (2014), pp. 43–62; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Cynthia Weber, ‘IR: The resurrection or new frontiers of incorporation’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:4 (1999), pp. 435–50.

²⁹See, among others, Soumita Basu, ‘Security as emancipation: A feminist perspective’, in J. Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg (eds), *Twenty Years of Feminist International Relations: A Conversation about the Past, Present and Future* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006); Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013); Stern and Zalewski, ‘Feminist fatigue(s)’, Christine Sylvester, *War as Experience: Contributions from International Relations and Feminist Analysis* (London and New York NY: Routledge, 2013); Annick T. R. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Lauren B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁰See, among others, Pal Ahluwalia, ‘Afterlives of post-colonialism: Reflections on theory post-9/11’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 10:3 (2007), pp. 257–70; Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, ‘The postcolonial moment in security studies’, *Review of International Studies*, 32:2 (2006), pp. 329–52; Jana Hönke and Markus-Michael Müller, ‘Governing (in)security in a post-colonial world: Transnational entanglements and the worldliness of “local” practice’, *Security Dialogue*, 43:5 (2012), pp. 383–401; Meera Sabaratnam, *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd, 2017); Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

³¹See, among others, Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden, ‘The posthuman way of terror’, *Security Dialogue*, 46:6 (2015), pp. 513–29; Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden, *The Emancipatory Project of Posthumanism* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017); Cameron Harrington, ‘Posthuman security and care in the Anthropocene’, in Clara Eroukhmanoff and Matt Harker (eds), *Reflections on the Posthuman in International Relations: The Anthropocene, Security and Ecology* (Bristol: E-International Relations, 2017); Audra Mitchell, ‘Only human? A wordly approach to security’, *Security Dialogue*, 45:1 (2014), pp. 5–21.

³²The authors cited in notes 29–32 above represent a small and wildly partial selection of the brilliant research undertaken within each of these traditions; many more who are equally deserving of recognition fall outside of these traditions entirely.

³³See Sarah Lambie, ‘Queer necropolitics and the expanding carceral state: Interrogating sexual investments in punishment’, *Law Critique*, 24 (2013), pp. 229–53; Corinne L. Mason, ‘Global violence against women as a national security “emergency”’, *Feminist Formations*, 25:2 (2013), pp. 55–80; Simon Flacks, ‘Law, necropolitics and the stop and search of young people’, *Theoretical Criminology*, OnlineFirst, available at: {<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480618774036>}.

³⁴See also Heath-Kelly, ‘Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap?’, p. 72.

security as the survival of the sovereign state. A logic of militarism *militarises* prevention, predicated prevention on the availability and suitability of military institutions and solutions to mitigate conflict. A logic of peace, conversely, *pacifies* prevention, constituting prevention as the transformation of conflict, violence, and peacelessness into peace. Prevention can thus be articulated into multiple and quite different constellations of meaning – meanings that are fundamentally at odds, creating the paradox of prevention alluded to in the title of this article.

Discourse and logics: On method

Following a Derridean deconstructive approach to a text, it is possible to identify ‘the mechanisms, processes and practices through which a text orients, balances, and structures itself’,³⁵ through the application of ‘pressure’ to those moments of textual balance.³⁶ Deconstructive discourse analysis can show how subjects and objects are constituted as known/knowable, and how the discourse in question creates relational chains of meaning between these subjects and objects such that they are known/knowable in particular ways – according to particular logics. Logics organise a discourse, and produce, through signification, the overarching semblance of fixity that allows for the expression of the known/knowable. These logics are never predetermined, and it is in fact part of the ethos of deconstructive discourse analysis that the taking apart of discourse is always a project of radical possibility. The ‘centre’ or logics of the discourse that hold together certain possibilities, while precluding others, create instead of instability the appearance of totality (though of course such an appearance of totality is always precarious).³⁷

The idea that discourses are held together by logics is of central importance in this research. Logics structure the organisation of concepts within discourse, creating associative chains of value and hierarchy that structure the position and relationship of subjects and objects. Different logics inform different discourses that have radically different effects. If we take security discourses as an example, discourse on national security, for example, underpinned by a logic of state-centrism and a logic of anarchy, produces very different political possibilities (and policy prescriptions) than discourse on human security, underpinned by a logic of equality, and a logic of dignity. Similarly, different discourses of gender construct masculine subjects as *either* aggressors or protectors (though these are of course intertextually articulated with other discourses and logics that constitute *some* masculine subjects as aggressors and *some* as protectors – ‘virtuous masculinity depends on its constitute relation to the presumption of evil others’).³⁸ The theoretical claim here is simply that discourses are governed by logics, and that both discourses and logics have constitutive effects – they produce, rather than describe, the worlds we encounter as researchers.

To excavate the logics of discourse, to apprehend the construction of meaning, a researcher can deploy textual analytical strategies in a deconstructive mode. For this investigation, I have selected Roxanne Lynn Doty’s methods of analysis,³⁹ involving the analysis of *predication* and

³⁵Jacques Derrida, cited in Penny Griffin, ‘Deconstruction as anti-method’, in Laura J. Shepherd (ed.), *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 209–23 (p. 210); see also Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 10–18.

³⁶Richard Devetak, ‘Postmodernism’, in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, M. Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, and Jacqui True (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (3rd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 169.

³⁷Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Biddles Ltd, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, 2001), p. 96.

³⁸See Iris Marion Young, ‘The logic of masculinist protection: Reflections on the current security state’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29:1 (2003), p. 13. Since developing the concept of logics in earlier research, I have worked with the very brilliant [redacted], whose work on the discursive construction of gender and protection in humanitarian normative frameworks pushed me to think further about conceptualising logics and how they work. My thinking on logics also owes a debt to Weber’s examination of queer logics of statecraft; see Weber, *Queer International Relations*.

³⁹Roxanne Lynn Doty, ‘Foreign policy as social construction: A post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:3 (1993), pp. 297–320; Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*

subject-positioning. As Doty explains, ‘together, these methodological concepts produce a “world” by providing positions for various kinds of subjects and endowing them with particular attributes’.⁴⁰ Crucially, this world then makes possible certain kinds of activities, outcomes, and sensibilities, while other possibilities are foreclosed. This method of analysis is attentive to

how a discourse *produces* this world ... how it renders logical and proper certain policies by authorities and in the implementation of those policies shapes and changes people’s modes and conditions of living, and how it comes to be dispersed beyond authorized subjects to make up common sense for many in everyday society.⁴¹

The ‘common sense’ of prevention is thus what is at stake in this analysis.

Of course, prevention discourse, even when limited to its articulation in the WPS agenda, exists beyond the Security Council resolutions that make up the formal architecture. There are many other sites and artefacts of WPS practice that are worthy objects of study; research might engage, for example, the articulation of prevention discourse in the UN Secretary-General’s annual reports to the Council on women, peace and security, or in different national contexts through examination of national action plans for the implementation of the WPS agenda.⁴² How prevention discourse operates and travels in institutional contexts might also be interrogated, through interviewing staff associated with prevention-focused initiatives undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, or the African Union, or NATO.⁴³ These are all important terrains and vectors of prevention discourse and, to better understand the specific logics of prevention in these contexts, future research should carefully examine the sites and artefacts that articulate prevention in detailed and contextualised analysis. The focus of this research, however, is the WPS resolutions, as a component of broader WPS practice. Although the WPS agenda cannot be reduced to the resolutions that represent its policy architecture, the resolutions are the negotiated and agreed upon product of UN member state and civil society deliberations about priorities and emphases for the agenda at the point of adoption. They are therefore meaningful policy objects that, taken together, reveal baseline state and civil society agreements and parameters of the agenda, and can be analysed as part of the discursive terrain of the agenda.⁴⁴

(Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also Linda Åhäll and Stefan Borg, ‘Predication, presupposition and subject-positioning’, in Shepherd (ed.), *Critical Approaches to Security*, pp. 196–207.

⁴⁰Doty, ‘Foreign policy as social construction’, p. 307.

⁴¹David Campbell, cited in Jennifer Milliken, ‘The study of discourse in international relations: A critique of research methods’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:2 (1999), pp. 225–54 (p. 236).

⁴²On the productive power of WPS national actions plans, see, among others, Maria Martín De Almagro, ‘Producing participants: Gender, race, class, and Women, Peace and Security’, *Global Society*, 32:4 (2018), pp. 395–414; Gina Heathcote, ‘Security Council Resolution 2242 on Women, Peace and Security: Progressive gains or dangerous development?’, *Global Society*, 32:4 (2018), pp. 374–94; Jamie J. Hagen and Toni Haastrup, ‘Global racial hierarchies and the limits of localisation via national action plans’, in Soumita Basu, Paul Kirby, and Laura J. Shepherd (eds), *New Directions in Women, Peace and Security* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020), pp. 133–52; Doris Asante and Laura J. Shepherd, ‘Gender and countering violent extremism in Women, Peace and Security national action plans’, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, FastTrack, available at: {<https://doi.org/10.1332/251510820X15854973578842>}.

⁴³On the productive power of institutional WPS governance and protocols beyond the UN, see, among others, Roberta Guerrina and Katharine A. M. Wright, ‘Gendering normative power Europe: Lessons of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 293–312; Katharine A. M. Wright, ‘NATO’S adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Making the agenda a reality’, *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 350–61; Toni Haastrup, ‘WPS and the African Union’, in Davies and True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, pp. 375–87.

⁴⁴See, for example, Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* (London: Zed, 2008); Laura J. Shepherd, ‘Sex, security and superhero(in): From 1325 to 1820 and beyond’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13:4 (2011), pp. 504–21; Nadine Puechguirbal, ‘Discourses on gender, patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A textual analysis of UN documents’, *International Peacekeeping*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 172–87; Nicola Pratt, ‘Reconceptualising gender:

The insights derived from such an analysis are necessarily partial, both in terms of the ability of a single study to capture the complexity of WPS practice, and in terms of the method's engagement solely with the conditions of possibility of implementation, rather than implementation itself. The study of implementation requires different questions, and different techniques. Similarly, a discourse-theoretical analysis of the resolutions cannot reveal how or why the resolutions contain the language that they do; the process of negotiation among member state representatives and the advocacy efforts of allied actors can be elicited in interview or through participant-observation and these are important avenues of enquiry. The aim here is not to suggest that resolutions – or indeed any other document or textual artefact – are indicative of how WPS works, and is worked with, in implementation, but to make the rather different argument that the words of WPS matter, in structuring the conditions of WPS action. Discourse-theoretical methodology conceives of textual practice as a significant site for analysis in its own right, rather than as backdrop to, or documentation of, implementation practice. This research shows how different logics of prevention, configuring different meanings of prevention in WPS prevention discourse, open up various possibilities while foreclosing others. The affordance of discourse-theoretical methodology, in which logics and other forms of discursive arrangement are excavated, is to demonstrate not only the productive power of text, but also the contingency of meaning, such that meanings can change. With shifts in meaning construction, the realities constituted by contemporary configurations of discourse themselves become visible as contingent; such an approach allows people 'to imagine how their being-in-the-world is not only changeable, but perhaps, ought to be changed'.⁴⁵ Given the pressing significance of prevention efforts in world politics, and the dominance, as I argue below, of logics of militarism and security in WPS prevention discourse, a methodology that reveals the contingency of such dominance is, while necessarily limited, potentially fruitful indeed.

Prevention in the Women, Peace and Security agenda

The United Nations, as the institutional home of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, has a long, if somewhat chequered, history of prevention in rhetoric and practice. UN prevention discourse more broadly is grounded in the first Article of the UN Charter, which commits member states to, among other things, such collective actions as are necessary 'for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace'.⁴⁶ Subsequent Secretaries-General have reaffirmed or rearticulated the relative priority of conflict prevention: Kofi Annan, for example, saw prevention as central to the role of the Secretary-General, and was committed both to developing regional prevention alliances and to equipping the Secretariat with robust information and data that could inform preventative action in a timely fashion.⁴⁷ The Security Council began to debate its role in prevention in the late 1990s, coinciding with broader shifts in the discursive terrain of security within that institution; at the time, Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the international community to move 'from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention'.⁴⁸ The current Secretary-General,

Reinscribing racial-sexual boundaries in international security: the case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security", *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:4 (2013), pp. 772–83.

⁴⁵Jennifer Milliken, 'The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:2 (1999), pp. 225–54 (p. 244).

⁴⁶United Nations, *UN Charter* (1945), Article 1, available at: {<http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>} accessed 13 September 2018.

⁴⁷James Sutterlin, *The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Security: A Challenge to be Met* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), pp. 18–19.

⁴⁸United Nations, 'Secretary-General Says Global Effort Against Armed Conflict Needs Change From "Culture Of Reaction To Culture Of Prevention"' (1999), available at: {<https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19991129.sc6759.doc.html>} accessed 27 March 2020; on the changing security discourse at the Council, see David Malone, 'The Security Council in the 1990s: Inconsistent, improvisational, indispensable', in R. Thakur and E. Newman (eds), *New Millennium, New Perspectives: The United Nations, Security and Governance* (New York, NY: UN University Press, 2000), pp. 21–45; Matt

António Guterres, has similarly made conflict prevention a linchpin of his agenda. In remarks delivered on his behalf to a side event during the 2017 Commission on the Status of Women titled 'Women, Peace and Security and Prevention', Guterres's 'prevention agenda' was elaborated, envisioning cohesive action across all UN spheres of engagement; work is being undertaken to enable 'upstream prevention efforts', creating 'an integrated platform for early detection and action building on a mapping of prevention capacities in the system'.⁴⁹

As noted above, the Women, Peace and Security agenda includes prevention as one of its four 'pillars'.⁵⁰ There has, however, been relatively little attention paid to the prevention pillar in scholarship or practice. Katrina Lee-Koo, for example, has commented that '[t]he prevention pillar ... tends to be marginalised',⁵¹ while Soumita Basu and I have argued elsewhere that 'prevention is visible only "in pieces"' rather than as a coherent and consistently well-articulated dimension of the agenda.⁵² In this section, I show that prevention in WPS discourse is embedded in at least three different constellations of meaning, structured by three different logics: *conflict prevention* (structured in accordance with a logic of peace); the *prevention of sexual violence* (structured in accordance with a logic of militarism); and the *prevention of 'violent extremism'* (structured in accordance with a logic of security). Prevention thus emerges as a paradox, or impossibility: either it is configured as utopian/ideal; or it collapses into security/militarism. To show this, I examine the policy architecture of the agenda (narrowly conceived), engaging in a textual analysis of the Security Council resolutions adopted under the title of 'Women and Peace and Security'.⁵³

McDonald, 'Human security and the construction of security', *Global Society*, 16:3 (2010), pp. 277–95; Jutta Joachim, 'Framing issues and seizing opportunities: The UN, NGOs and women's rights', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47:2 (2003), pp. 247–74.

⁴⁹United Nations Secretary-General, 'Remarks to the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women Side Event – Women, Peace and Security and Prevention: New Directions and Opportunities, delivered by Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Secretary-General's Senior Advisor on Policy' (2017), available at: {<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/remarks-sg-team/2017-03-15/remarks-61st-session-commission-status-women-side-event-women>} accessed 13 September 2018. As might be expected, the Secretary-General's initiatives tend toward the data-driven; early warning systems and prevention capacity are 'things' that can be measured, which aligns with a more general appreciation of quantification in the UN system. As Sally Engle Merry so astutely notes, '[u]nder the evidence-based regime of governance, it is necessary to be counted to be recognised. Quantification makes issues visible and reveals the extent and scope of a problem. But things that are more easily counted and more often counted tend to be those counted in the future, while those that have not been counted or are hard to quantify tend to be neglected and thus disappear from view.' See Sally Engle Merry, *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 219.

⁵⁰Although the focus of this study is the prevention pillar, there is much overlap and crossover between the pillars of WPS activity. It is certainly the case that there is resonance, for example, between the way that protection (against sexual violence) is constituted at times in accordance with a logic of security; this could usefully be the focus of future research. I am grateful for comments from an anonymous reviewer that prompted me to reflect on this.

⁵¹Katrina Lee-Koo, 'Engaging UNSCR 1325 through Australia's National Action Plan', *International Political Science Review*, 37:3 (2016), pp. 336–49.

⁵²Basu and Shepherd, 'Prevention in pieces', p. 449.

⁵³The resolutions adopted under the title of 'Women and Peace and Security' are: United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2000*, S/RES/1325 (2000), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820*, S/RES/1820 (2008), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/1820\(2008\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1820(2008))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888*, S/RES/1888 (2009), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/1888\(2009\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1888(2009))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1889*, S/RES/1889 (2009), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/1889\(2009\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1889(2009))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1960*, S/RES/1960 (2010), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/1960\(2010\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1960(2010))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2103*, S/RES/2103 (2013), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/2103\(2013\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/2103(2013))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122*, S/RES/2122 (2013), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/2122\(2013\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/2122(2013))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242*, S/RES/2242 (2015), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/2242\(2015\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/2242(2015))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2467*, S/RES/2467 (2019), available at: {[https://undocs.org/S/RES/2467\(2019\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2467(2019))}; United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 2493* (2019), available at: {[http://undocs.org/S/RES/2493\(2019\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/2493(2019))}.

The dominant attachments of prevention across the WPS resolutions can be mapped using NVivo as shown in Figure 1. This graphic depicts the immediate context of the word ‘prevention’ in all ten of the current WPS resolutions; on the left-hand side of the image are the words that come immediately before each articulation of the word ‘prevention’, and on the right-hand side are the words that follow. The meaning of prevention is thus irreducible; its plural and oppositional logics render it a paradox.

Further, I ran a simple word frequency query in NVivo to establish the number of mentions in each resolution. Stemmed words were included (represented as ‘prevent*’), meaning that the program reported all words containing ‘prevent’, such as prevent, preventing, and preventative. Figure 2 depicts the results of this query; it shows a steady increase in frequency of mentions of prevention in the resolutions, since a low point in 2009 with the adoption of UNSCR 1889.⁵⁴ Notably, though, the most recent resolution does not feature prevention prominently, despite the fact that the resolution focuses on women’s participation in initiatives to create peace.⁵⁵

Conflict prevention

In UNSCR 1325, ‘prevention’ is firmly articulated with conflict: it appears three times and in each representation it is association with conflict either directly (as in the phrase ‘conflict prevention’)⁵⁶ or indirectly (as in the phrase ‘prevention, management, and resolution of conflict’).⁵⁷ This articulation is reproduced in a number of resolutions: UNSCR 1820 mentions ‘prevention and resolution’ of conflict four times,⁵⁸ for example, while the Preambular material of UNSCR 1889 reproduces the articulation of conflict prevention and conflict resolution three times.⁵⁹ Further, UNSCR 2493 relates ‘the prevention of conflict’ directly to ‘women’s participation in peacebuilding efforts’ in one of the operative paragraphs.⁶⁰

Soumita Basu and Catia Confortini posit that the limited focus on prevention in practice is a function of the conflict prevention agenda being associated with the transformation of gendered structures of inequality and discrimination. In their very persuasive analysis, they argue that the linking of conflict prevention with gender equality presents three inhibitors to the development of a strong and consistent prevention pillar, rendering it an impossibility. First, the prevention agenda is hampered by the slippage between gender and women, ‘as is generally prevalent at the United Nations’,⁶¹ as women are not taken seriously as political actors. Second, the UN system tends to overlook the work done in local prevention initiatives and, further, ‘there is little evidence of ... [the WPS resolutions] being used in official mandates of the Security Council to invest in and engage with ... women’s groups and local actors as partners in conflict prevention’.⁶² Third, and finally, Basu and Confortini suggest that the prevention element of the WPS agenda is potentially too radical a project for an organisation such as the United Nations. Because UNSCR 1325 ‘leaves the “war system” intact’,⁶³ full realisation of the prevention dimension of the WPS agenda ‘would require fundamental changes at the United Nations and in the global system’.⁶⁴ Associating prevention with the resolution of conflict functions to link prevention to

⁵⁴S/RES/1889 (2009).

⁵⁵S/RES/2493 (2019).

⁵⁶S/RES/1325 (2000), Preamble.

⁵⁷Ibid., para. 1.

⁵⁸S/RES/1820 (2008), Preamble, para. 12.

⁵⁹S/RES/1889 (2009), Preamble.

⁶⁰S/RES/2492 (2019), para. 4.

⁶¹Basu and Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod?’, p. 54. See also Carol Cohn, Helen Kinsella, and Sheri Gibbings, ‘Women, Peace and Security Resolution 1325’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6:1 (2004), pp. 130–40.

⁶²Basu and Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod?’, p. 55.

⁶³Carol Cohn cited in Basu and Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod?’, p. 55.

⁶⁴Basu and Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod?’, p. 56. Soumita Basu and Laura J. Shepherd reach a similar conclusion in their analysis of prevention discourse in the UK, Australia, and India; they argue that ‘the silences around violence

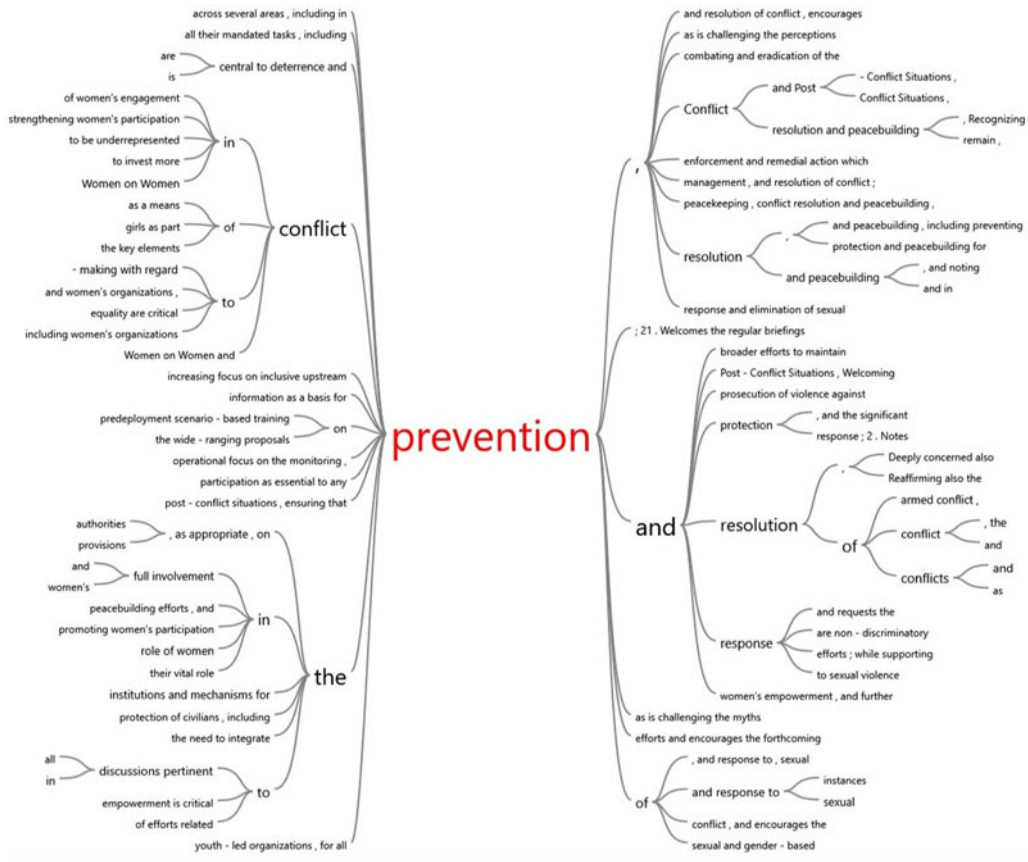


Figure 1. Prevention in context across the WPS resolutions.

the ‘maintenance of international peace and security’; this should create horizons of possibility around the concept of prevention that open, rather than foreclose, discussions about peace. But the logic of peace instead creates the impossibility of prevention. Further, as Figure 1 demonstrates, several attachments are not related to peace but instead constitute prevention in relation to management of conflict, peacekeeping, and sexual and gender-based violence.

The prevention of sexual violence

Prevention, when it is associated with sexual violence in conflict, is structured in accordance with a logic of militarism in the WPS resolutions. In UNSCR 1820, for example, the ‘deployment of a higher percentage of women peacekeepers or police’⁶⁵ is presented as a measure to combat conflict-related sexual violence. Resolution 1888 links prevention to sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, noting the Council’s intention to build in prevention language to peacekeeping mission mandates⁶⁶ and the importance of combatting impunity for such violence.⁶⁷ In

and conflict [in these cases] create parallel silences around prevention such that it is only visible in pieces’. See Basu and Shepherd, ‘Prevention in pieces’, p. 450.

⁶⁵S/RES/1820 (2008), para. 8.

⁶⁶S/RES/1888 (2009), para. 11.

⁶⁷Ibid., para. 7.

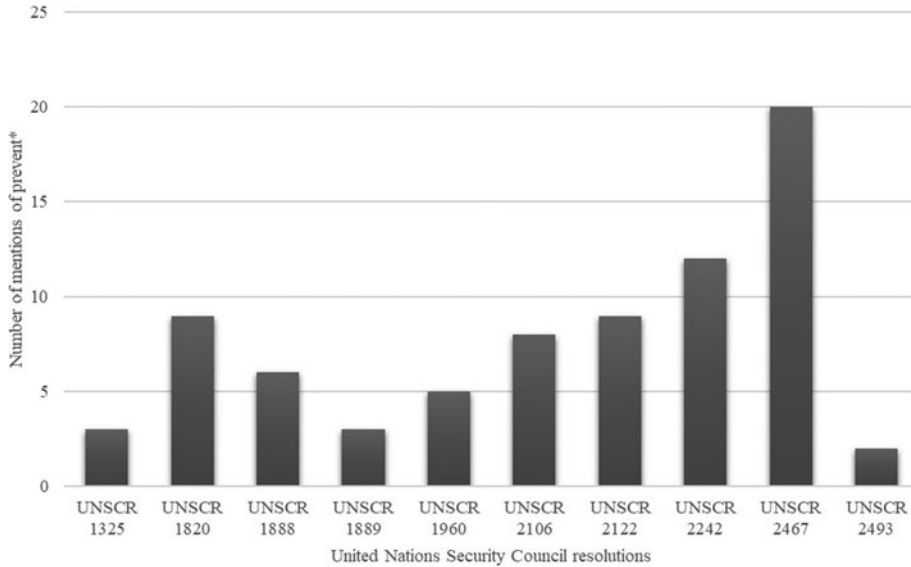


Figure 2. Mentions of prevent* in the WPS resolutions over time.

practice, this prevention work is associated with peacekeeping, police, and military forces. UNSCR 2122, which otherwise has prevention language strongly focused on structural change and women's participation in peacebuilding, similarly posits increasing 'the percentage of women military and police in deployments to United Nations peacekeeping operations'⁶⁸ as an effective prevention initiative, which somewhat undermines the resolution's emphasis on women's agency: the resolution requests of the Secretary-General that they report to the Council 'on progress in inviting women to participate, including through consultations with civil society, including women's organizations, in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding'.⁶⁹ The value afforded to women's participation in these activities, not only through textual placement (in the second operative paragraph of the resolution) but also through the positioning of the request to the Secretary-General himself, is significant, and is reinforced later in the resolution when the Council 'recognizes with concern that without a significant implementation shift, women and women's perspectives will continue to be underrepresented in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding for the foreseeable future'.⁷⁰

Leaving aside UNSCR 2242 for a moment, to which I return in the section below, it is interesting to explore the construction of prevention in one of the most recent WPS resolutions, UNSCR 2467. As shown in Figure 1, this resolution contains by far the most mentions of 'prevent*' in the suite of WPS resolutions adopted by the Council, which is unsurprising given its focus on sexual violence; the resolution was adopted during the April 2019 open debate at the UN Security Council on sexual violence in conflict. Almost half of these mentions are in the Preamble, which is significant because the material in the Preamble is not binding or actionable, unlike the numbered operative paragraphs, which are considered the substantive elements of each resolution. The Preambular material in resolution 2467 associates prevention with conflict as well as with sexual violence, for example noting 'that the safety and empowerment of women and girls

⁶⁸S/RES/2122 (2013), para. 7.

⁶⁹Ibid., para. 2.

⁷⁰Ibid., para. 15, emphasis in original.

is important for their meaningful participation in peace processes, preventing conflicts and rebuilding societies'.⁷¹ The operative paragraphs, on the other hand, almost exclusively link prevention with sexual violence, with one exception in paragraph 20, as noted above. This paragraph strengthens the articulation of prevention and conflict forged in the Preamble and is worth quoting in full. In this paragraph, the Security Council

Encourages concerned Member States and relevant United Nations entities to support capacity building for women-led and survivor-led organizations and build the capacity of civil society groups to enhance informal community-level protection mechanisms against sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, to increase their support of women's active and meaningful engagement in peace processes to strengthen gender equality, women's empowerment and protection as a means of conflict prevention.⁷²

There is much of interest here in terms of the construction of prevention.

Again bearing in mind that this is the only point within the document at which prevention is articulated in the context of conflict prevention rather than the prevention of sexual violence, the resolution charges member states with building capacity within civil society as part of the governance of peace and security. Such encouragement weakens the link between the state and the provision of security, recognising that in this context (and therefore perhaps in other contexts), it might be 'women-led and survivor-led organizations' and 'civil society groups' who can create secure spaces for survivors of sexual violence and lead initiatives to *prevent* such violence. Further, this paragraph links the protection of women from sexual violence (and their empowerment) to conflict prevention, in fact marking out the strengthening of gender equality and women's empowerment as a prevention strategy. These representations of prevention 'fill the gap', per Heath-Kelly's formulations discussed above, in quite different ways than through the permission and exercise of force and sovereign power.⁷³

This is, however, one articulation of twenty in the resolution. The others conform broadly to the logic outlined in this section, such that prevention work is militarised. United Nations peace-keeping contingents are attributed a role in preventing sexual violence.⁷⁴ Paragraph 26 discusses the need to 'enhance the capacity of military structures to address and prevent sexual violence related crime',⁷⁵ and prevention is firmly anchored within the remit of the state, exhorting engagement 'with national authorities, as appropriate, on the prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations'.⁷⁶ While, as outlined above, there are tentatively different possibilities of prevention articulated within this resolution, the dominant construction of prevention here is prevention-as-militarisation. There is another construction of prevention within the agenda, however, which emerges through a close reading of UNSCR 2242.

Preventing, and countering, terrorism and violent extremism

The background against which prevention is constructed in UNSCR 2242 is composed of the institutional context at the UN in 2015, a year in which three major, high-level, reviews of the UN peace architecture were undertaken and the dynamics of the prevention pillar of the WPS agenda explained above. Given its introduction of a different articulation of prevention – in the form of 'preventing violent extremism' – UNSCR 2242 caused consternation among feminist activists and scholars alike when it was adopted in 2015. Concerns were raised that efforts to

⁷¹S/RES/2467 (2019), Preamble.

⁷²Ibid., emphasis in original.

⁷³Ibid., emphasis in original.

⁷⁴Ibid., para. 24.

⁷⁵Ibid., para. 26.

⁷⁶Ibid., para. 13.

prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism would instrumentalise women, endangering their relationships within their communities, and further reinforce the idea that minoritised communities are a source of insecurity and threat. There was also a worry that, given the political salience of, and investment in, terrorism and violent extremism, resources would be diverted from other important initiatives – that terrorism and violent extremism would become the dominant form of violence deserving of international attention, in relation to WPS and more broadly.⁷⁷ There are three operative paragraphs within the resolution that invoke prevention, associating the WPS agenda with the UN's counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism initiatives and establishing a mandate for 'the greater integration by Member States and the United Nations of their agendas on women, peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering-violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism'.⁷⁸

Three paragraphs of UNSCR 2242 are devoted to explaining how these agendas could align better, with the following elements: an emphasis on mainstreaming gender in the operations of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) (United Nations Security Council); calls for better data collection in this sphere; and 'the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism'.⁷⁹ It is noteworthy, however, that *prevention* is not actually the primary focus of the three relevant paragraphs. The primary focus of the three paragraphs of UNSCR 2242 that focus on violent extremism is on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CT/CVE). It is interesting that there has been such energy around prevention and such a clear articulation of a renewed commitment to prevention and yet the operative paragraphs of the resolution that seek to link the WPS agenda with terrorism and violent extremism prioritise *countering* these forms of violence rather than *preventing* them.⁸⁰

In these paragraphs, CT/CVE is located within the domain of security and intelligence, with the UN's Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate 'to hold further consultations with women and women's organizations to help inform their work'⁸¹ and CTED being encouraged 'to conduct and gather gender-sensitive research and data collection on the drivers of radicalization for women'.⁸² This is a fairly instrumental, extractive, vision of women's inclusion, and a model of 'integration' that both leaves undisturbed the politics of counter-terrorism and CVE at the UN and engages only superficially with the provisions and principles of the WPS agenda.⁸³ Paragraph 13 of UNSCR 2242 'welcomes the increasing focus on inclusive upstream prevention efforts'⁸⁴ but this is the sole mention of prevention in

⁷⁷For analysis, see, among others, Pip Henty, 'Women, Peace and Countering Violent Extremism' (2017), available at: {<https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/women-peace-and-countering-violent-extremism/>} accessed 13 September 2018; Anna Möller-Loswick, 'The Countering Violent Extremism Agenda Risks Undermining Women Who Need Greater Support' (2017), available at: {<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/221-the-countering-violent-extremism-agenda-risks-undermining-women-who-need-greater-support>} accessed 13 September 2018; Gender Action for Peace and Security, 'Prioritise Peace: Challenging Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism from a Women, Peace and Security Perspective' (2018), available at: {http://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GAPS-report_Prioritise-Peace-Challenging-Approaches-to-P-CVE-from-a-WPS-perspective.pdf} accessed 13 September 2018.

⁷⁸United Nations Security Council, 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General. A/70/674' (2015), para. 11, available at: {<https://undocs.org/A/70/674>} accessed 10 September 2018.

⁷⁹Ibid., para. 13.

⁸⁰My understanding is that the shift reflects sustained negotiation among members of the Security Council regarding the politics of prevention and the ways in which prevention efforts sit alongside the principle of non-intervention.

⁸¹United Nations Security Council, 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism', para. 11.

⁸²Ibid., para. 12.

⁸³See also Sophie Giscard d'Estaing, 'Engaging women in countering violent extremism: Avoiding instrumentalisation and furthering agency', *Gender & Development*, 25:1 (2017), pp. 103–18.

⁸⁴United Nations Security Council, 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism', para. 13.

the three operative paragraphs that are widely considered to have prevention as their explicit focus.

Prevention thus emerges in UNSCR 2242 as a collective ‘effort’ that happens ‘upstream’ (read: chronologically prior to and simultaneously separate from the domain of peace and security) and can be ‘inclusive’, while *countering* threats to peace and security remains firmly within the remit of security organisations – the CTC and CTED, which Fionnuala Ní Aoláin describes as ‘male-dominated security institutions ... whose interest in a robust dialogue about the definition of terrorism, the causes conducive to the production of terrorism, and the relationship between terrorism and legitimate claims for self-determination by collective groups has been virtually nil’.⁸⁵ As Pip Henty observes, the effect of having three paragraphs ostensibly related to prevention but in operation articulating a vision of security as a means to counter perceived threat is to risk (further) ‘militarising the agenda, as in many contexts CVE sits, and is associated, with the military, defence or police’.⁸⁶ In sum, prevention is constituted here in accordance with a logic of security, which is closely related to the logic of militarism discussed above. These logics could not be farther removed from the logic of peace that is subordinated in the construction of prevention in the WPS agenda.

Little security everything⁸⁷

This article has shown that prevention is plural, undecidable, paradoxical; it is never fully knowable and never complete. In the WPS agenda, its logics are logics of peace, militarism, and security, with militarism and security dominating even within what is widely described as a ‘peace agenda’. Though the management and achievement of security is necessarily illusory, security has an apparatus and a will to power such that it is easier to obscure its incompleteness and uncertainties while prevention cannot be thus contained. Thus, prevention submits to and is perpetuated within the techniques and rationalities of governance that is focused on ‘eliminating insecurity’⁸⁸ and not preventing violence and harm. Constituting prevention in this way creates the conditions for, and legitimacy of, militarised and securitised initiatives and efforts under the auspices of ‘prevention’ – activities which, in turn, are likely to increase peacelessness.

I have situated my analysis in the context of research on the productive power of peace and security governance, specifically research on prevention and pre-emptive security practices that draw out the logic of risk that organises prevention in the context of counter-terrorism. Through a deconstructive approach to prevention in the WPS agenda, I have attempted to show that prevention manifests as a paradox. The ‘experience’ of prevention, in Derridean terms, is the imperative to sit with it as a concept even as it is undone, unmade in its articulation in opposition to militarism/security even as it is simultaneously fixed *as* militarism/security through coherence of the dominant logics that structure it in discourse. What is at stake here is twofold. First, if prevention is articulated into discourse as plural and undecidable, then this requires the exploration of critical and difficult questions about what can be achieved in the name of prevention. This includes engaging seriously and consistently with the constructions of prevention in Security Council discourse and exploring the possibilities for reconstruction. While the often fraught process of negotiation at the Council might seem to mitigate against the possibility of prevention’s reconstruction according to logics other than militarism/security, the very existence of the ‘Women and Peace and Security’ agenda at the Council demonstrates

⁸⁵Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, ‘The “war on terror” and extremism: Assessing the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs*, 92:2 (2016), pp. 275–91 (p. 276).

⁸⁶Henty, ‘Women, Peace and Countering Violent Extremism’.

⁸⁷With apologies. Jef Huysmans, ‘What’s in an act? On security speech acts and little security nothings’, *Security Dialogue*, 42:4–5 (2011), pp. 371–83.

⁸⁸Claudia Aradau, ‘Only aporias to offer? Étienne Balibar’s politics and the ambiguity of war’, *New Formations*, 58 (2006), pp. 39–46 (p. 43).

that it is possible to pry open spaces for engagement in even the most conservative contexts. Clearly, a blanket prescription to reconstruct prevention will not solve all associated issues – is in fact likely to create as many issues as it addresses – but thinking about how to foster political energy around conflict prevention creates the opportunity for WPS practitioners and advocates to ‘reclaim SCR 1325 as a tool for feminist purposes and work with it harder, stronger, differently’.⁸⁹ This might include articulating conflict prevention more consistently with peacebuilding, in Security Council resolutions and beyond, or deliberately addressing the structural conditions of peacelessness. This is particularly important because second, and relatedly, if prevention as currently constituted collapses, when pressed, into militarist and security measures taken to alibi the impossibility of achieving security now and in the future, then the kind of security politics that are espoused and supported – including but not limited to those presented in our scholarly musings – take on a renewed significance.

Felicity Ruby has stated: ‘I do not think SCR 1325 has been used enough as a tool of conflict prevention.’⁹⁰ I have shown here that simply pushing forward with the prevention pillar of the WPS agenda *as it is currently configured* is unlikely to have positive effects in the pursuit of sustainable peace. Further, if the above analysis of prevention is persuasive, and prevention is undone in the moment of its articulation into practice such that it collapses into militarism/security, then the concept of security that is used to think with – in relation to peace, in relation to governance, in relation to the resolution of conflict and the recognition of dignity and the constitution of grievable lives – is of profound significance. As outlined above, there is a wealth of resources on which to draw in this endeavour. The WPS agenda purports to offer a transformative vision for peace, but its articulation of prevention in accordance with dominant logics of militarism and security render such transformation unlikely, if not impossible. In line with the conclusions offered by Basu and Confortini,⁹¹ it may be that working to reconstruct prevention in the WPS agenda is a necessary precondition for enabling the transformation of the war system that feminist activists and advocates desire.

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⁸⁹Felicity Ruby, ‘Security Council Resolution 1325: A tool for conflict prevention?’, in Gina Heathcote and Dianne Otto (eds), *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 173–84 (p. 179).

⁹⁰Ruby, ‘Security Council Resolution 132’, p. 178.

⁹¹Basu and Confortini, ‘Weakest “P” in the 1325 pod?’.