

CHAPTER 01

SETTING THE CONTEXT

+ “Equality between women and men is
inextricably linked to peace and security.”

Ambassador **Anwarul Chowdhury**,
High-Level Advisory Group for the Global Study, UN Women Video Interview, 2015

The world has changed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 in October 2000. The nature of conflict in certain regions is qualitatively different, the content of what we mean by peace and security is evolving, and the understanding of what we mean by justice has also transformed. This ever-changing and ever-evolving reality poses major dilemmas for the four pillars of Security Council resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions: the pillars of prevention, participation, protection, and peacebuilding and recovery. It is in this context that the Global Study undertakes a fifteen-year review of resolution 1325. It looks at the gaps that need to be filled as well as the need to revisit some fundamental assumptions.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICT HAS CHANGED

Since World War II, the actual number of conflicts and the number of civilians affected by conflict has drastically reduced. And yet it is public perception that the world is in the midst of an unprecedented, devastating state of conflict and crisis. One reason for this is that the global media and advances in communication technology have brought the stark reality of existing conflicts into people's living rooms and workplaces, thereby raising awareness about the scale of destruction, and the pain and suffering of civilian casualties. Our interconnectedness, therefore, makes it appear that conflict is extremely devastating and never-ending.

Secondly, conflicts in many parts of the world are also more protracted. In these situations, for civilians living in these areas, violence has been normalized, warlords become role models, the economy is unregulated and States remain fragile for long periods of time. These protracted conflicts destroy civilian life. Criminal action becomes prevalent as drug trafficking, human trafficking and smuggling and corruption begin to dominate public life. Rapacious industries dealing with raw materials also mark their entry. Private security firms, paramilitaries and other shadowy armed groups begin to appear often splintering from main rebel formations. The level of insecurity makes ordinary

everyday life a struggle and survival is everyone's preoccupation.

Thirdly, since 2001, the nature of conflict in certain, specific areas of the world has changed in dramatic ways. In fact, **in the survey that was undertaken among civil society organizations for the Global Study, 84 per cent of the respondents stated that the emerging issues of concern were violent extremism and counter-terrorism.** In the 1990s most of the wars were in Africa, linked to a system of fragile States and powerful warlords. Today, there are new types of conflict that directly involve civilian populations in an unprecedented manner.

While terrorist acts had been a regular phenomenon even earlier, since 2001 the nature and scale have proved to be destructive to an unprecedented degree. Suicide bombing and explosions aimed at civilian targets seemed to reach a peak in the first decade of the century. Their cruelty and brutality has actually left the international community very shaken but unusually united.

Warfare in certain areas of the world now tends to be even more asymmetrical; rebel groups with rudimentary weapons and explosives fight larger powers with state-of-the-art weaponry. As one woman in a conflict area told us, "the coalition controls the sky, the rebels control the community." As many of the fighters for violent extremist groups involved in these wars are drawn from the community or are their own children, women often find themselves in an ambivalent situation, torn between a need to protect the community and their children and to fight off extremism and its often negative impact on women's rights. Many women, inspired by the discourse of revolution or salvation, are also beginning to join extremist groups in large numbers as warriors and are affected by conflict not only as mothers, daughters and sisters.

In attempting to deal with this growing phenomenon, States have reacted strongly, if not effectively. Within their borders and abroad their strategies have involved a greater use of surveillance and force. Earlier 'acts of terror' were dealt with using police powers, but today it is termed a "War on Terror." This blurring of distinction between human rights under police jurisdiction and the

international humanitarian law of armed conflict has resulted in morbid symptoms for international law and administrative practice. Targeted assassinations, use of aerial bombardment in internal, non-'armed conflict' situations, and extraordinary legislation and executive measures taken for surveillance and detention practices are creating new human rights dilemmas.

These measures may increase a sense of security, and may actually deter attacks, but they also lead to greater polarization and radicalization, as well as to group and individual acts of resistance. In this process many women are forced to remain ambivalent as they watch their community being torn asunder or securitized by polarizing forces. They often do not like the tactics of the extremists but do not want to side with the forces that target their sons, husbands or families or discriminate against them. This ambivalence is seen as complicity by counter-terrorism purists and as inadequate commitment by ardent insurgent fighters.

The period since 2000 has also seen a great deal of technological innovation that is changing the nature of warfare. Though there has been a great deal of positive use of technology to protect populations and to assist in the humanitarian effort, the technology of weapons used in conflict is much more devastating. Unmanned aerial weapons of war, new types of aircrafts and new types of ground to surface weapons have posed new and unforeseeable dilemmas for women living in warzones. This is a decade where brutal 'in your face' beheadings of individuals co-exist side by side with the clinical targeting of places and individuals where women are mere numbers in what is termed 'collateral damage.' So, women in this century can be brutally gang raped and mutilated in one continent, requiring individual survivor assistance, while being treated as merely an anonymous, clinical number in another.

Today's wars, whether in fighting traditional civil wars or engaging in asymmetrical warfare, have resulted in the largest number of IDPs and refugees since World War II, leading to terrible humanitarian consequences. This is made more difficult by the fact that sacrosanct humanitarian spaces and the neutrality of humanitarian actors is not always

respected, leaving civilian populations deeply vulnerable with little chance of survival except as a refugee or an IDP. In these contexts, older women often come forward as peacebuilders and humanitarian actors, as they are often the only people who have the legitimacy and trust of all sides to do humanitarian work.

In making these criticisms, one cannot be blind to certain imminent threats posed by violent extremist groups from diverse ethnic and religious groups who do not recognize dissent, democracy or the rights of women. However, the overwhelming opinion of women living in those areas, as well as women practitioners working in the field, was that force alone cannot be the answer. There must be greater emphasis on prevention, more empowerment of women peacebuilders while respecting their autonomy, and more resources placed to make strategies of prevention realizable. Conflicts must be prevented, and if they are inevitable, they must become more humane.

THE NATURE OF ROOT CAUSES HAS CHANGED

While the practices of war have changed in some parts of the world, so have many of the perceived 'root causes.' While the wars immediately after World War II were nationalist wars or political wars based on political ideology, many of today's wars are religious or ethnic in origin. They are firmly in the realm of identity politics and in their most extreme form, deeply conservative and reactionary toward women and their rights.

In 2000 when resolution 1325 was adopted, the major issues facing women in situations of conflict were the brute force of sexual violence, losing children or loved ones to the conflict, being forced to or voluntarily becoming a combatant, and/or leaving one's possessions as vulnerable refugees or internally displaced persons. Today all these concerns remain, but in addition, in certain wars, women's concerns have become more dire while, at the same time, the nature of warfare invades their most private spaces, those spaces in the family and the community where their sense of identity and security are deeply threatened. In every one of these new situations they are faced with

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stark, impossible choices and, as a result, they are often constantly living in a state of insecurity and ambivalence.

While identity politics has become dominant, some of the other underlying root causes of conflict, from discrimination to climate change, still remain and they are consistent problems that require long-term structural changes. Donor policies that emphasize the 'project' only provide a Band-Aid and sometimes prevent societies from addressing these issues with far-sighted policies. Some of the issues concerning women will take decades of diligent, consistent practice to change. The international community should address its mind to these long-term structural issues in a more systematic manner.

MULTILATERAL PROCESSES UNDER STRESS

In 2000 when the Security Council passed resolution 1325, after the wars in Bosnia and Rwanda, the world was a united place especially around issues of women, peace and security as well as children and armed conflict. A great deal of activity resulted from this resolution at the international, national and regional levels. Women, as well as Member States, were galvanized. Finally there were universal standards and best practices to draw from and the possibility of dialogue and communication across countries and cultures. However, since then, although there have been major steps forward with regard to sexual violence, the atmosphere of easy consensus has clearly changed. The political process is far more polarized, both within the Security Council and outside, and decisions are

taken at a painstakingly slow pace because of distrust and fears of hidden agendas.

This polarization and distrust have taken a toll on the WPS agenda as well as other thematic items on the agenda of the Council. There is a belief that the momentum behind resolutions such as 1325 are slowing and are resulting in the lowest common denominator, often held hostage to political expediency, as well as political bartering and negotiation. For this reason, there was a belief among stakeholders that the next decade of women, peace and security should not only seek to consolidate gains within the Security Council but also begin to identify other forums and institutions to propel the issues forward.

In this regard, not only other multilateral forums linked to the UN, but, also, regional organizations and sub-regional organizations were identified as those that could assist in ensuring the implementation of resolution 1325. National governments were also called upon to become the primary drivers of 1325 and women's organizations to be adequately funded at the community level to ensure that they hold their governments accountable. UN agencies were also requested to raise the visibility of the issues concerned and create institutional structures at headquarters and the field that will ensure no gap between international norms and their implementation.

FRAGILITY OF STATES AND THE RISE OF NON-STATE ACTORS

While the doctrine of sovereignty is acquiring renewed energy due to recent developments at the international level, the nation state as the foundation of the international system is also under stress. Globalization and global networks impinge on practically every sovereign, national decision and regional, political, economic and social linkages are often even more powerful. Within States, non-State actors sometimes command a great deal of power whether they be multi-national extractive industries or armed groups controlling large swathes of territory. In some contexts, the situation of 'Occupation,' where State-like entities exist without proper international recognition, is also one that is not in the best interest of their civilian population, and that prevents them from having the full protection of international law and international human rights.

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The rise of regional organizations has given a new opportunity for women, peace and security issues to have more focused energy and direction. Both the European Union and the African Union have begun to play an active role on issues relating to women, peace and security. The need to strengthen these developments cannot be overstated and there is hope that the initiatives will spread to other regions.

However, regional organizations also pose their own set of dilemmas for women, peace and security and impinge on national sovereignty in new and unique ways. Consultations in the Middle East, the Caucasus and South Asia with women in the area revealed a reluctance and wariness with regard to regional organizations, especially when it was felt that one or a few major powers would dominate. In contrast, in Africa and Europe where many of the States wielded equal power, there was a great deal of trust and reliance on regional initiatives. In dealing with issues of peace and security, these factors should also be taken into consideration.

The power of non-State actors in fragile States cannot be underestimated. The main type of non-State actors we see around the world are, of course, armed groups in control of territory who run parallel governments that force taxation and local level regulation. For civilian populations under their control, non-State actors do not really have a clear status under international law. The Velasquez

doctrine imposes upon States a duty of due diligence, to ensure that the actions of non-State actors meet with international standards. However, if the writ of the State does not run into the areas controlled by non-State actors, how does one ensure compliance with international standards? How does one measure progress?

Many States prohibit any contact between UN agencies and non-State actors whom they regard as criminal gangs. However, it is important to find a recognized and acceptable way to allow humanitarians to go into territories controlled by non-State actors and engage them on issues relating to the protection of civilians, including women. Direct accountability of non-State actors for war crimes and crimes against humanity exist under the Geneva Conventions, and now under the Rome Statute as well as in Security Council resolutions related to monitoring and reporting. These need to be strengthened so that these actors also feel the full force of the law and the deterrence of punishment.

A different type of non-State actor is the transnational corporate entity. During and after war, weak regulatory frameworks allow for rapacious corporations, especially in extractive industries, to make substantial investments. These industries displace populations, have their own systems of intrusive security, encourage rampant corruption and have enormous influence on government at all levels. Many women and their organizations complained of being displaced and receiving little or no compensation. They are also at the receiving end of violence by private security forces attached to these industries.

DIVERSITY

One clear message that came through in consultations for the Global Study was that the world is a diverse place. The universality of UN norms and values must be understood in that context. Acknowledging diversity requires inclusivity in peacemaking so that women and other marginalized groups are part of any peace process. It also involves recognizing the diverse systems of justice and paths of reconciliation that exist around the world. When engaging in peacebuilding, it requires that we do not adopt a one-size-fits-all policy and that we map local needs and skills in a specific location before we implement programmes.

Recognizing diversity also means understanding diversity among women and the different sets of problems that each category of women face in each context. It also means that when women are included in the peace process, the diversity among them is reflected, and their representation in any formal process is not tokenism or only reflective of the majority will.

NATURE OF ‘PEACE’ HAS CHANGED

For decades, peace meant mainly the silencing of guns and the renewal of formal politics as the way of governance. Ceasefires and demobilization were the main focus of peace processes. However, today it is recognized that peace is something far more than the ‘absence of violence.’ Peace has increasingly meant an inclusive political process, a commitment to human rights in the post-war period and an attempt to deal with issues of justice and reconciliation.

Over time, research has shown that sustainable peace is only possible if there is inclusive peacemaking—something that the Global Study clearly proves with regard to women. Earlier research has also shown that along with women’s participation, justice and reconciliation are other factors that lead to sustainable peace, and that make programmes operationally effective. **Both inclusivity and justice, therefore, rest on a post-conflict process that privileges human rights as a central element in the post-war architecture.**

NATURE OF ‘SECURITY’ HAS CHANGED

Again, in earlier eras, security too was seen in the context of the ‘absence of violence.’ **Today, security is seen in a far more expansive way that is not only limited to containing physical violence.** Security also has political, economic and social dimensions. It is both public and private. It means absence of fear but also absence of want. It also

+ “What’s happened in peace and security is that we’ve completely neglected half of the population, and so, we then become surprised that peace isn’t sustainable[...]. And the only way to make something sustainable is to make it indigenous, to make it a cultural change.”

Alaa Murabit, High-Level Advisory Group for the Global Study, UN Women Video Interview, 2015

implies active agency, to be allowed to participate in the decisions that are made on your behalf. While security in the old paradigm was linked to ensuring the survival of individuals, in recent times it is recognized as a broader term aimed at securing the well-being of individuals and their communities. While women were not a major factor in the earlier definitions of security, current approaches—which include security in the home and the community—make them central actors and stakeholders.

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

For centuries justice has been seen as the punishment of perpetrators who commit crimes against victims. Colonial legal regimes that form the basis of much of the law around the world also reinforced punitive notions of justice. Given the heinous nature of war crimes and crimes against humanity, one cannot move completely away from punitive notions, since that would mean an acceptance of impunity. In the case of sexual violence, the international community has already spoken loudly and clearly with one voice. However, in recent times, punitive aspects of justice have been augmented by calls for reparations and reconciliation, including the collective search for truth and the preservation of memory. In civil wars, this type of approach is seen as essential for communities to recover and for justice to play a transformative role in the healing process.

THE UN HAS CHANGED

In 2000, the UN was primarily seen as a development organization and UNDP was seen as its primary instrument, especially in the field. Today, with a nine billion dollar budget, UN Peacekeeping seems to have become the core mandate of the UN, though some still resist this change. This thrust into proactive peace operations has caught the organization unawares. The response has often been ad hoc, without systematic planning. A review of United Nations Peace Operations, conducted at the same time as the Global Study, has addressed these issues at length. Women have been affected by this change in the UN's emphasis. They are far below their representation levels in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, both in headquarters and the field. The issue of sexual abuse by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers still remains a problem for the UN that requires effective and strong action. Finally, the UN's role in the protection of civilians, including women, has now become a paramount concern of Member States and public opinion.

The competition for resources that gives peacekeeping such a large share of the pie also has implications for women around the world, especially those not living in conflict situations. The loss of a heightened focus on development and social and economic rights that are central to the everyday lives of women, means that these priorities within countries that require international support are either not funded or receive less funding than they should.

AN EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION AND A 'NO' TO MILITARIZATION

Reliance on the use of force as the sole means of conflict resolution may, itself, actually create and perpetuate a cycle of violence. This is why women all over the world reiterated that military responses should be used sparingly. As was stated earlier, they argued that prevention and protection through non-violent means should be emphasized more by the international system, and more resources should be dedicated to this endeavor. If force is used, even for the protection of civilians, there must be clarity and clear, attainable objectives.

The great changes we are undergoing must also be understood in the context of the needs and concerns of women in specific situations of conflict. The 'local' must clearly be the most important factor in our analyses. Nevertheless, women spoke with one voice from every continent to convey a key message to the Security Council: the United Nations must take the lead in stopping the process of militarization and militarism that began in 2001 in an ever-increasing cycle of conflict. The normalization of violence at the local, national and international levels must cease. Networks of women peacebuilders and peacemakers must be expanded and supported to come to the fore. Their solidarity is essential if we are to move the world toward the original vision of the United Nations, where nations turn their 'swords into ploughshares' and act with conviction to prevent wars through dialogue and discussion.