

# Regionalism and Human Protection

*Reflections from Southeast Asia and Africa*

*Edited by*

Charles T. Hunt  
Noel M. Morada



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# Bridging the Protection Gap: Rethinking the ‘Three Pillars’ to Eliminate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in ASEAN

*Maria Tanyag*<sup>1</sup>

Monash University

*Maria.Tanyag@monash.edu*

## Abstract

This chapter situates the growing academic and policy interest in advancing international normative frameworks namely the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in ASEAN within broader feminist critiques of the ‘protection gap’ that results from the ‘siloining’ of international security and peace agendas. It builds on recent works that suggest a rethinking of ASEAN as constituted by three distinct community pillars (political-security, economic, and socio-cultural) for fully addressing human security and development in the region. Using the ASEAN Regional Plan for Action (RPA) of the 2013 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW), which covers a ten-year period (2016–2025), this chapter makes a case for how the RPA can serve as a critical vector for broadening the significance of R2P and WPS in the region to address sexual and gender-based violence as occurring both in crisis situations and ‘everyday life’.

## Keywords

ASEAN – Women, Peace, and Security agenda – Responsibility to Protect – VAW – SGBV – gender

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- 1 This chapter has been developed from an initial think piece for the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect’s *Asia Pacific Outlook*. The author is grateful to the Centre for enlisting her as a representative to attend the civil society consultations on the Regional Plans of Action (RPAs) on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (EVAWC) convened by the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) on 29–30 March 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.

*Perhaps you have never imagined what it would feel like if you were a woman fleeing your home with your young children, escaping a violent conflict between government troops and rebel soldiers, crossing a national border, pitching a tent in a muddy refugee camp, and then being treated by aid staff workers as though you and the children you are supporting were indistinguishable, “womenandchildren.”*

CYNTHIA ENLOE<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Despite the noted decline of mass atrocities in the Asia Pacific region, feminist perspectives that render visible the ‘continuum of violence’ argue that this does not automatically mean a decline of violence per se.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, they draw our attention to what forms of violence remain invisible, ‘under the radar’ or excluded from global peace and security agendas. In the case of Southeast Asia, a growing body of academic and policy research have sought to investigate and build knowledge around regional norm promotion of R2P and WPS. Building on critical research on how these two international peace and security frameworks are advanced through ASEAN, this chapter considers how both are relevant and constitute urgent concerns in light of the region’s designation as among the top areas where a large number of people are frequently exposed to multiple natural hazards and internal displacement.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, recalling the historical roots of the R2P doctrine, the conceptual reframing of sovereignty as responsibility emerged from the development of national and international

2 Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2014/1989 p. 1).

3 Jacqui True, ‘Winning the Battle but Losing the War on Violence,’ *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17/4 (2015), pp. 554–572; Sara Davies, Jacqui True and Maria Tanyag, ‘How women’s silence secures the peace: analysing sexual and gender-based violence in a low-intensity conflict,’ 24/3 (2016), (pp. 459–473). See for further discussion of the so-called ‘East Asian Peace’ Alex Bellamy, ‘Atrocity Prevention: From Promise to Practice in the Asia Pacific,’ *Global Responsibility to Protect* 8 (2016), pp. 180–199.

4 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Disaster-related Displacement Risk: Measuring the Risk and Addressing the Drivers* (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015), p. 8.

principles for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the regional promotion and implementation of WPS is equally imperative for ASEAN to address the cross-border needs and gender-specific vulnerabilities of women and girls who represent half of the displaced populations in the Asia Pacific region.

This chapter is divided into three main parts. First, I provide a critical review of the existing scholarship around the potential alignments of WPS and R2P as key international normative frameworks for addressing the distinct vulnerability of women and girls to different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in crisis situations. Second, I build on feminist critiques of the ‘silencing’ that results from a ‘pillars approach’ for what should be an interconnected peace and security agenda. This means that gender equality which includes the elimination of SGBV is considered as cutting across political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions rather than compartmentalised as a socio-cultural concern only. However, I argue that ASEAN itself is structured according to ‘three community pillars’ thus replicating some of these global challenges at the regional level. Finally, I use the RPA on ERAW to suggest a potential pathway for bridging the protection gap resulting from the silencing of ASEAN’s three community pillars. The RPA primarily discusses violence against women with contextual references to how they occur in crisis situations of armed conflicts and natural disasters, as well as in ‘everyday life’. The RPA therefore can serve as a crucial vector for linking conflict-related SGBV and substantive gender equality reforms as a way to deepen the advancement of R2P and WPS in ASEAN. By doing so, the RPA can instigate the strengthening of the institutional integration of ASEAN’s three community pillars in eliminating gendered violence and inequalities.

### Gender Alignments of WPS and R2P

The R2P doctrine and WPS agenda constitute key international normative frameworks on civilian protection and prevention of mass atrocities in

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5 Lucy Hall and Laura J. Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P: Theorising Responsibility and Protection’ in Davies et al., *Responsibility to Protect and Women, Peace and Security* (Leiden: BRILL, 2013), p. 54. See also Francis M. Deng and Roberta Cohen, *Masses in Flight* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998); Roberta Cohen, “Reconciling R2P with IDP Protection,” in Sara E. Davies and Luke Glanville (eds.), *Protecting the Displaced: Deepening the Responsibility to Protect* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010), pp. 35–58.

armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> A growing body of research have started to map out how and where the two separate frameworks intersect. Largely due to its historical development, R2P has been commonly associated with militarised humanitarian interventions.<sup>7</sup> It emerged as a galvanizing principle in response to the inaction of the international community in the face of mass atrocities perpetrated in countries such as Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s. Under the R2P doctrine, state sovereignty is reconceptualised as a duty to protect civilian populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Moreover, when a state has demonstrated its inability to uphold this duty and as a last resort, the international community has an obligation to intervene in a timely and decisive manner. It is also, as various scholars point out, ‘gender-blind’ in that it does not explicitly acknowledge the multitude and distinct experiences of women and girls in armed conflict.<sup>8</sup> And yet, as Davies, Nwokora, Stamnes and Teitt argue, ‘the responsibility to protect those at risk of sexual and gender based violence is not just part of a wider protection agenda—it is a fundamental sovereign obligation.’<sup>9</sup>

WPS rectifies R2P’s relative neglect of gendered inequalities by drawing attention to the disproportionate consequences of wars and conflicts on women and girls, and the important roles they play for achieving sustainable peace and security.<sup>10</sup> The WPS agenda is built on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and several subsequent resolutions. It identifies three priority areas which broadly align with R2P: the meaningful *participation* of women in peace and security governance; the *protection* of women’s rights and bodies in conflict and post-conflict situations; and lastly, *prevention* of systematic and widespread SGBV.<sup>11</sup>

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- 6 Sarah Hewitt, ‘Overcoming the Gender Gap: The Possibilities of Alignment between the Responsibility to Protect and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,’ *Global Responsibility to Protect* 8 (2016), pp. 3–28; Jacqui True, ‘Explaining the global diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda,’ *International Political Science Review* 37/3 (2016), pp. 307–323.
- 7 Sara Davies, Sarah Teitt, and Zim Nwokora, ‘Bridging the Gap: Early Warning, Gender, and the Responsibility to Protect,’ *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50/2 (2015), pp. 228–249.
- 8 Davies, Teitt and Nwokora, ‘Bridging the Gap: Early Warning, Gender, and the Responsibility to Protect’; Sara Davies, Zim Nwokora, Eli Stamnes, and Sara Teitt (eds.), *Responsibility to Protect and Women, Peace and Security: Aligning the Protection Agendas* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013), pp. 1–6; Hall and Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P’.
- 9 Davies et al., *Responsibility to Protect and Women, Peace and Security: Aligning the Protection Agendas*, p. 1.
- 10 UN Women, *Peace and Security: In Brief*, 2013, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security> accessed 31 August 2016.
- 11 Laura Shepherd, ‘Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda: 2015 and beyond,’ *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Expert Analysis*, 28 August 2014, <http://www>

Thus, WPS and R2P not only share the same goals in terms of protecting civilian populations—half of which consist of women and girls—and preventing mass atrocities in conflict situations including SGBV. Both are also regarded as capable of mutually reinforcing one another to effectively advance a more comprehensive approach to peace and security.<sup>12</sup> However, despite their shared goals, the two remain disjointed. Failure to link WPS with R2P undermines the importance of engaging ‘all actors and early warning mechanisms throughout the UN system’ which is necessary for fulfilling both protection mandates.<sup>13</sup>

Davies, Teitt and Nwokora argue that one potential avenue for linking WPS and R2P is through the development and explicit inclusion of gender-specific indicators for early warning frameworks that predict countries at risk of, and therefore help prevent mass atrocities.<sup>14</sup> For instance, studies have empirically demonstrated the causal relationships between the occurrence of mass SGBV, and pre-existing gender hierarchies that influence the distribution of resources and access to political and economic decision-making in a given society.<sup>15</sup> These studies indicate that normalized and systemic gender discrimination as root causes of violence help us determine where mass atrocities including SGBV are likely to occur. They also reveal which groups of women and girls are most likely to be targeted due to their societal exclusions including lack of access to justice and state protection mechanisms.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, incorporating gender-specific indicators in early warning frameworks addresses the three shared goals of WPS and R2P on prevention, protection and participation by underscoring how these goals are in fact interconnected and mutually reinforcing. As I discuss further below, drawing from feminist perspectives wherein violence is reconceptualised as a continuum is necessary for bridging the protection gaps between forms of violence that occur in ‘everyday life’ and in securitised settings of armed conflict.

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.peacebuilding.no/Themes/Inclusivity-and-gender/Publications/Advancing-the-Women-Peace-and-Security-agenda-2015-and-beyond; Laura J. Shepherd and Jacqui True, ‘The Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Australian Leadership in the World: From Rhetoric to Commitment?’ *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 68/3 (2014), 257–284.

12 Hewitt, ‘Overcoming the Gender Gap’.

13 Davies, Teitt and Nwokora, ‘Bridging the Gap: Early Warning, Gender, and the Responsibility to Protect,’ p. 229.

14 Ibid.

15 Jennifer Bond and Laurel Sherret, ‘Mapping Gender and the Responsibility to Protect: Seeking Intersections, Finding Parallels,’ *Global Responsibility to Protect* 4/2 (2012), pp. 133–153; Sara Davies and Jacqui True, ‘Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence: Bringing gender analysis back in,’ *Security Dialogue* 46/6 (2015), pp. 495–512;

16 Davies and True, ‘Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence’; Davies, True and Tanyag, ‘How women’s silence secures the peace: analysing sexual and gender-based violence in a low-intensity conflict’.

Mainstreaming WPS into R2P implementation frameworks, however, warrants some caution. As several scholars point out, integrating the two might undermine or limit the much broader agenda of WPS given the current remit of R2P.<sup>17</sup> First, both WPS and R2P emphasise securitised settings of armed conflicts which risk obscuring how the causes and consequences of particular forms of mass atrocities are rooted in pre-existing or deeply-embedded gendered inequalities that must be equally addressed. This is manifested in that WPS and, to a certain extent, R2P due to its gender-blindness, have a tendency to privilege protection over prevention. SGBV in conflict is prevalently assumed as inevitable through a disproportionate focus on victims and perpetrators.<sup>18</sup> As True and Tanyag point out, securitisation of sexual violence in conflict particularly through WPS has ‘either detracted from, or served to depoliticize, comprehensive gender equality goals and outcomes.’<sup>19</sup> Although WPS reflects a broader understanding of the causal role played by gender before and after conflicts particularly through an explicit aim for stronger women’s participation in peace processes, women’s experiences in conflict are often reduced in practice as single-issue concerns that can be readily crossed out of checklists rather than constitute substantive gender equality goals.<sup>20</sup> Preventing SGBV in conflict therefore must involve the integrated implementation of WPS alongside the sustainable development goals and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>21</sup>

Second, integrating the two might come at the cost of reducing women’s identities and experiences in conflict settings to that of victimhood thereby denying them of political agency. For example, Hall and Shepherd in theorising the discursive links between WPS and the R2P doctrine, demonstrate that the concept of protection itself is gendered such that protection is ‘afforded to women by men, and, in return for the security provided by the protective

17 See for examples Katrina Lee-Koo, ‘Translating UNSCR 1325 into Practice: Lessons Learned and Obstacles Ahead’, in Davies et al., *Responsibility to Protect and Women, Peace and Security*, pp. 35–52; Hall and Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P’.

18 Inger Skjelsbæk, ‘Responsibility to Protect or Prevent? Victims and Perpetrators of Sexual Violence Crimes in Armed Conflict’, in Davies et al., *Responsibility to Protect and Women, Peace and Security*, pp. 81–100.

19 Jacqui True and Maria Tanyag ‘Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective,’ in Anthony Burke and Rita Parker (eds.), *Global Insecurity: Futures of Global Chaos and Governance* (Palgrave, 2017), pp. 43–63.

20 Ibid.

21 Shepherd, ‘Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda,’ UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, 2015, <http://wps.unwomen.org/en> accessed 31 August 2016.

services, women accept the authority of their male protectors.<sup>22</sup> This logic, they argue, is reproduced through R2P wherein the protector identity is vested upon the sovereign state and the international community – both remaining male-dominated arenas.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, a masculine construction of the protector ‘produces a feminised infantilized subject in need of protection.’<sup>24</sup> This occurs as many feminist scholars also note when women are treated as essentially weak, vulnerable and passive victims usually conflated with children and the elderly.<sup>25</sup> While WPS is similarly informed by such ‘protection stereotypes’, it nevertheless provides a broader understanding of and has gradually encompassed women’s agency and not just experiences of victimhood. Still, references to women’s political agency in peace and security agendas such as WPS are often hinged on essentialist constructions of women as *innate* peacebuilders due to ‘feminine qualities such as nurturing, empathy, cooperation, non-violence with a focus on community well-being rather individual interests.’<sup>26</sup>

Treating women as either helpless victims or essentially pacifists is problematic in that both produce women as a homogenous group. This means that their inclusion within international security and development agendas is predicated on fitting them within these stereotypes. Such an approach, which fails to encompass the range of gender and sexual identities, can create and exacerbate the insecurities experienced by broader groups of women and girls as well as men and boys.<sup>27</sup> Feminist research has long argued that gender is not a synonym for women.<sup>28</sup> To establish the gender alignments between WPS and R2P as Stamnes argues, ‘it is not enough simply to add the perspective and participation of women. Social structures and institutions, and their particular hierarchies of femininities and masculinities, must be the subject of investigation and change.’<sup>29</sup> From a feminist perspective, integrating R2P and WPS

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22 Hall and Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P’, p. 63

23 See also Hilary Charlesworth, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect’, *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 2/3 (2010), pp. 232–249.

24 Hall and Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P’, p. 70; Marion I. Young, ‘The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,’ *Signs* 29/1 (2003), pp. 1–25.

25 Charlesworth, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect’.

26 True and Tanyag, ‘Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective’; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Charlesworth, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect’.

27 True and Tanyag, ‘Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective’; Charlesworth, ‘Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect’.

28 Hall and Shepherd, ‘WPS and R2P’, p. 74; True and Tanyag, ‘Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective’.

29 Eli Stamnes, ‘The Responsibility to Protect: Integrating Gender Perspectives into Policies and Practices,’ *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 4/2 (2012), p. 190.

therefore is not about making wars safer for women but rather fundamentally rethinking how we understand international peace and security as occurring in a continuum across various socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions, across household, state and global levels, as well as during times of crisis and in everyday life.<sup>30</sup>

### *Feminist Continuum of Violence*

Feminist theorising of global violence recognises that violence occurs in a continuum, and thus mutually shaped by material and ideological or cultural factors.<sup>31</sup> First, this entails examining how violence occurring in crisis contexts such as armed conflicts is structurally connected to the violence experienced in 'everyday life'.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, as feminist scholars argue, security from the perspective of women is not simply the absence of war or conflict. It also means addressing the various gendered inequalities they contend with post-conflict especially in terms of the economic devaluing of the unpaid care and domestic work they perform in society.<sup>33</sup> Second, violence is manifested in different but interconnected forms across physical, structural and symbolic insecurities.<sup>34</sup> That is, violence does not only consist of direct harms inflicted upon an individual body, it also constitutes discrimination and marginalisation from accessing material resources and political decision-making which in turn are rendered normal by cultural or religious narratives and representations. Lastly, violence from a feminist perspective challenges the artificial separation between so-called public and private realms. For instance, as Charlesworth argue,

The lives of women appear peripheral to the development of the responsibility to protect principle, except for occasional references to the need to protect women from mass rape. The principle focuses on the public realm of the state and the government as the source of injury, but for most women, danger comes from the 'private' realm of the family or

30 Jacqui True, *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); True and Tanyag, 'Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective'.

31 True, *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women*; True and Tanyag, 'Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective'.

32 True and Tanyag 'Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective'; Juanita Elias and Shirin Rai, 'The Everyday Gendered Political Economy of Violence,' *Politics & Gender* 11/2 (2015), pp. 424–429.

33 Ibid.

34 Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,' *Journal of Peace Research* 6/3 (1969), pp. 167–191.

community as much as from the state... Discrimination against women in areas such as inheritance and family law is justified by custom or religion.<sup>35</sup>

The political violence experienced by women in the public sphere is intimately related to the more 'invisible' forms of violence they experience in the private sphere of the family, clan and/or ethnic community where many women and girls are typically denied bodily autonomy.<sup>36</sup> As Yuval-Davis emphasises, women's bodies serve as symbolic carriers of group identity and are therefore at the heart of political contestations on how society and the roles and relationships within it ought to be.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, studies have shown that various conflict-related SGBV are perpetrated with impunity against women and girls precisely because they embody the ethnic, religious, or indigenous minority groups they belong to.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, 'private sphere' violence against women and girls is co-constitutive of public forms of political violence including armed conflicts. Cockburn, for example, argues that

[P]atriarchal gender relations predispose our societies to war. They are a driving force perpetuating war. They are among the causes of war. This is not, of course, to say that gender is the only dimension of power implicated in war. It is not to diminish the commonly understood importance of economic factors (particularly an ever-expansive capitalism) and antagonisms between ethnic communities, states and blocs (particularly the institution of the nation-state) as causes of war.<sup>39</sup>

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35 Charlesworth, 'Feminist Reflections on the Responsibility to Protect', p. 242.

36 True, 'Winning the Battle but Losing the War on Violence,' p. 555; Davies and True, 'Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence'; Davies, True and Tanyag, 'How women's silence secures the peace'; Maria Tanyag, 'Peace, Sex and Violence in Mindanao,' 15 August 2016, [http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian\\_outlook/peace-sex-and-violence-in-mindanao/](http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian_outlook/peace-sex-and-violence-in-mindanao/) accessed 31 August 2016.

37 Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, 'Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC)', *International Studies Quarterly*, 53/2 (2009), pp. 495–518.

38 Davies and True, 'Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence'; Baaz and Stern, 'Why Do Soldiers Rape?'

39 Cynthia Cockburn, 'Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12/2 (2010), p. 140.

When we recognise violence as encompassing multidimensional threats we become attentive to the ways by which binary logics distinguishing conflict / peace time, private/public, household/the state actually undermine the core goals of both WPS and R2P.

I argue that both WPS and R2P need to be more strongly tethered to the feminist notion of a continuum of violence. Instead, what is actually prevalent is a siloed approach that *separates* rather than *connects* the immediate political-military pillar and long-term socio-economic development pillar of international peace and security.<sup>40</sup> For example, as True points out, ‘most UN peacebuilding missions have given primacy to re-establishing law and order (the military/political security pillar) rather than restoring women and men’s livelihoods (the economic security pillar) after conflict.’<sup>41</sup> That is, post-conflict economic reforms underpinned by principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment typically receive less political attention and resources compared to re-establishing law and order.<sup>42</sup>

Obscuring the equal importance of political-military and socio-economic concerns is detrimental to women and girls because the absence of inter and intra-state armed conflicts does not automatically mean a cessation of SGBV perpetrated against women and girls at the household and community levels. Moreover, this does not help us identify and consequently address the various structural and symbolic barriers that prevent broader groups of women and girls from fully participating in political and economic decision-making which is one of the core goals of WPS.

### WPS and ASEAN’s Three Community Pillars

In this section, I now turn to the case of ASEAN to further illustrate how the siloing of political-military and socio-economic development pillars of

40 True and Tanyag, ‘Global Violence and Security from a Gendered Perspective’; Shepherd, ‘Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda’; Jacqui True, ‘The Political Economy of Gender in UN Peacekeeping’ in Dianne Otto and Gina Heathcote (eds), *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 243–262.

41 True, ‘The Political Economy of Gender in UN Peacekeeping,’ p. 245.

42 See for example Jacqui True, ‘Post-conflict economic reform is a Women, Peace and Security Issue,’ 31 July 2016, <http://wilpf.org/post-conflict-economic-reform-is-a-women-peace-and-security-issue/> accessed 31 August 2016.

international peace and security agenda is reinforced at the regional level. Specifically, I build on current debates around the norm promotion for human protection and atrocities prevention within ASEAN through institutional engagements with the WPS agenda primarily and R2P secondarily. ASEAN provides an interesting case in that its conceptualisation of regional peace and security is also built on three community pillars namely *political-security*, *economic*, and *socio-cultural* communities. I argue that the ‘community pillars’ approach in ASEAN replicates some of the global challenges I discussed above in terms of comprehensively advancing the participation, protection, and prevention goals of WPS. Thus, ASEAN can potentially promote a regional WPS and R2P agenda that is informed by a feminist continuum of violence. This effort also serves to instigate a rethinking of the separation of the three community pillars in policy and practice. Importantly, advancing WPS and R2P in such a manner is consistent with the calls from CSOs in the region for improved coordination among the three ASEAN communities for the elimination of violence against women.<sup>43</sup>

TABLE 1 2017 Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) and Southeast Asia (annual averages)<sup>44</sup>

| Rank | Country     | Deaths per<br>100 000<br>Inhabitants | Total losses<br>in million<br>US\$ PPP | Losses per<br>unit GDP<br>in % | Number of<br>events (total<br>1996–2015) |
|------|-------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| 2    | Myanmar     | 14.71                                | 1 300.74                               | 0.737                          | 41                                       |
| 5    | Philippines | 1.00                                 | 2 761.53                               | 0.628                          | 283                                      |
| 8    | Vietnam     | 0.41                                 | 2 119.37                               | 0.621                          | 206                                      |
| 10   | Thailand    | 0.22                                 | 7 574.62                               | 1.004                          | 136                                      |

43 See Maria Tanyag, ‘Sexual & Gender based violence: Regional Consultation of the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children with Civil Society Organisations on the Implementation of Regional Plans of Actions on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children,’ *Asia Pacific Outlook*, April 2016, Issue 2 (Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect).

44 Sönke Kreft, David Eckstein and Inga Melchior, *Global Climate Risk Index 2017* (Bonn; Berlin: Germanwatch, 2016), 6.

The promotion of WPS and R2P within ASEAN is highly relevant and indeed auspicious amidst growing evidence-based claims that Southeast Asia is among the most crisis-prone regions in the world.<sup>45</sup> The occurrence of multiple and overlapping insecurities brought about by protracted internal conflicts and devastating natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes has caused immense death and displacement in the region. In particular, UNHCR notes that one third of the total global refugees are in the Asia Pacific at an estimated 3.5 million people. This is in addition to the 1.9 million internally displaced and 1.4 million stateless people.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Germanwatch's 2017 Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) identifies four ASEAN countries in the top ten countries most affected by climate-related disasters globally from 1996 to 2015 (see Table 1).<sup>47</sup> Lastly, Southeast Asia also consists of fragile states. The Fund for Peace Fragile States Index (FSI) offers an early warning for states on the brink of failure in terms of the inability to provide reasonable public services, the loss of legitimate authority and physical control over its territory among other indicators.<sup>48</sup> According to this index, all ASEAN member states except Singapore are characterised by varying levels of fragility and political instability (see Table 2). What these findings underscore albeit less explicitly is the need for further research and policy development to simultaneously address the conflict-specific and routine vulnerability of women and girls in this region which makes WPS an ASEAN regional governance priority.<sup>49</sup> Importantly, the diverse political and economic conditions affecting fragility among ASEAN member states and their different levels of capacity to address increasing precarity point to the importance of regional level cooperation.

45 Tamara Nair, 'Women, Peace and Security in the ASEAN: Need for a Distinct Action Plan,' RSIS Commentary, 23 December 2015, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Women-Peace-and-Security-in-the-Asia-Pacific.pdf> accessed 31 August 2016. See also UNFPA, *Shelter from the Storm: State of the World Population 2015* (New York: UNFPA, 2015); IDMC, *Disaster-related Displacement Risk*.

46 UNHCR, 'Asia and the Pacific' in *Global Reports 2013, 2014–2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/asia-and-the-pacific.html> accessed 31 August 2016.

47 This index quantifies the impacts of extreme weather events in terms of direct fatalities and indirect or long-term socio-economic losses sustained as a result of a disaster. For further information regarding the methodology used see <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2017.

48 For further information regarding the methodology used see <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/methodology>. See also OECD, *States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*, 2015, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/publications/documentuploads/SOF2015.pdf>; UNFPA, *Shelter from the Storm*.

49 Sara E. Davies, Kimberly Nackers and Sarah Teitt, 'Women, Peace and Security as an ASEAN priority,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68/3 (2014), pp. 333–355.

TABLE 2 2016 *Fragile States Index and ASEAN member states*

| Rating           | Country     | Rank |
|------------------|-------------|------|
| Alert            | Myanmar     | 26   |
| High Warning     | Cambodia    | 46   |
|                  | Philippines | 54   |
|                  | Laos        | 55   |
|                  | Thailand    | 74   |
| Elevated Warning | Indonesia   | 86   |
|                  | Vietnam     | 106  |
|                  | Malaysia    | 115  |
| Warning          | Brunei      | 123  |
|                  | Singapore   | 161  |

ASEAN as a regional organisation has made significant strides in adopting a normative commitment to human security and protection, including the advancement of women, peace and security concerns. ASEAN's community building phase from 2008–2015 was marked by efforts to embed ASEAN regionalism within frameworks that adhere to international norms including state sovereignty as responsibility, and the protection of women and children.<sup>50</sup> This period began in 15 December 2008 when the ASEAN Charter was adopted which formally codified a new set of values, commitments and targets to achieve enhanced regional cooperation and integration.<sup>51</sup> The Charter specifically established ASEAN as a community comprising three pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Social Cultural Community (ASCC). Under Article 14, the Charter also created the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) which is intended to serve as an 'overarching body with a cross-cutting mandate that handles matters related to human rights cooperation with other ASEAN bodies, external partners and stakeholders.'<sup>52</sup> This was

50 Noel M. Morada, 'Southeast Asian Regionalism, Norm Promotion and Capacity Building for Human Protection: An Overview,' *Global Responsibility to Protect* 8 (2016), pp. 111–132.

51 See 'Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations,' <http://asean.org/asean/asean-charter/charter-of-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations/> accessed 31 August 2016.

52 See 'Overview,' <http://asean.org/asean-political-security-community/asean-intergovernmental-commission-on-human-rights-aichr/overview/> accessed 31 August 2016.

followed by the momentous adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the creation of ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in 2012.

As part of ASEAN's community building phase, the region has also developed an institutionally complex approach to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights.<sup>53</sup> Among the several institutions and mechanisms dedicated to advancing 'women-specific' concerns are through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) and within it is the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW). Another example is the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) which then houses the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).<sup>54</sup> The ACWC, as various scholars point out, is a pivotal ASEAN regional human rights mechanism because it is specifically mandated 'to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in ASEAN, based principally on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).'<sup>55</sup> Tellingly, however, the ACWC and the various specific mechanisms for promoting women's rights while increasingly complex, remain institutionally compartmentalised under the ASEAN socio-cultural pillar.

For example, Morada in mapping the adoption of a protection language across the documents of the ASEAN community pillars makes a strong case for the extensive normative scaffolding upon which potential engagements with WPS and R2P can be deepened. He identifies the frequency by which textual references on human protection were made in the ASEAN charter, blueprints for APSC and ASCC, and under the terms of reference (TOR) of AICHR, ACWC and AIPR. He finds that across all these documents, references to 'human rights protection scored the highest (18), followed by peace, conflict management and conflict resolution (16), and rule of law, democracy, and democratic values (each with 10 mentions).'<sup>56</sup> However, while the community building phase which has created the 'three pillars' approach has paved the way for establishing

53 Mathew Davies, 'Women and Development, Not Gender and Politics: Explaining ASEAN's Failure to Engage with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38/1 (2016), pp. 106–127.

54 Davies, 'Women and Development, Not Gender and Politics,' p. 110.

55 Davies, 'Women and Development, Not Gender and Politics'; Ma. Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, 'Building the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the ASEAN through Multi-Focal Norm Entrepreneurship,' *Global Responsibility to Protect* 8 (2016), pp. 158–179.

56 Morada, 'Southeast Asian Regionalism, Norm Promotion and Capacity Building for Human Protection,' p. 122.

the language of human protection within ASEAN, it has paradoxically also served to create 'silos' in the prevention of SGBV and promotion of gender-equality more broadly. This is evident in that references to 'respect for rights of women and children/ protection of women and children'; and 'gender mainstreaming/ elimination of violence against women' are almost exclusively only made under ACWC and the socio-cultural pillar. 'Adherence to international laws/norms/international humanitarian law/ principles on human rights protection/protection of women and children' only had a total of 6 mentions with one for each of the political-security and socio-cultural pillars. Meanwhile, references to 'peace process', 'peacebuilding', and 'conflict management/resolution' are all concentrated in the political-security pillar. 'Humanitarian assistance/refugees/displaced persons' is only ever referenced as a political-security issue with no mentions under ASCC, AICHR, and AIPR.<sup>57</sup> From a feminist perspective, this compartmentalisation of gender equality out of the political-security pillar embodies how gender biases consciously or unconsciously feed into institutional design.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, it serves to symbolically embed political and security decision-making as primarily masculine arenas.

### *Three Community Pillars and Protection Gaps*

Building on the feminist critiques already raised regarding the challenges to deepening the advancement of WPS and R2P globally, I argue that the ASEAN structure defined by three community pillars serves as a main impediment to meaningfully incorporating gender within regional peace and security frameworks. Indeed as Nair points out, 'there is [a] failure to engage women in peace and security issues across the socio-cultural, political-security and economic pillars upon which the ASEAN Community vision rests... The protection of women's (human) rights have essentially been confined to the socio-cultural areas and this is addressed separately from political and security concerns.'<sup>59</sup> First, As Davies, Nackers and Teitt argue, 'in the ASEAN Political-Security Community pillar, women are presented as benefitting from peace and security, but, crucially, not presented as being essential and conducive to its realisation.'<sup>60</sup> They further point out that references to women under the ACWC TOR primarily discursively represent women as victims in need of protection.<sup>61</sup> Moreover,

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57 Ibid.

58 See for example Diane Elson (ed), *Male bias in the Development Process*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

59 Nair, 'Women, Peace and Security in the ASEAN,' p. 2.

60 Davies, Nackers and Teitt, 'Women, Peace and Security as an ASEAN priority'.

61 Ibid, p. 342.

Davies argues that ASEAN primarily through its political elites holds a conservative and limited notion of gender which denies women of political agency while at the same time recognising their socio-cultural and economic contributions for regional growth.<sup>62</sup> What these critiques highlight is the regional reproduction of similar dichotomies between masculine protectors in this case ASEAN and its member states, and the collectively feminised and infantilised subjects of ‘women and children’ in ASEAN. Keeping women only under the rubric of socio-cultural and economic pillars implicitly promotes a deeply paternalistic and hierarchical relationship wherein protection is only ever afforded *to* women rather than them occupying key roles in promoting peace and security.

Second, while there have been an increasing push to shift ASEAN security discussions to incorporate ‘non-traditional’ security issues such as human rights, health and climate change, these remain severed from the masculinised political-security community pillar.<sup>63</sup> This siloing serves to deny ASEAN women a space in discussions of peace and conflict at national and regional levels – a clear undermining of core WPS goals. It also serves to reinforce a militarised notion of security rather than it encompassing all spheres of political, economic and socio-cultural activities. Importantly, as Pisanò rightly points out, ‘there are no references to human rights or, specifically, to women’s and children’s rights in the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint.’<sup>64</sup> This is an astonishing omission which highlights the imperative for employing a feminist political economy perspective that draws our attention to the continuum of violence. That the economic community pillar has remained impervious to gender as well as human rights mainstreaming is very telling of the detrimental impact of the siloing that occurs in peace and security agendas. CSOs have lobbied against the continued severance of ASEAN’s three pillars as a crucial barrier to addressing the various root causes of violence against women which includes the lingering threat of intensifying ASEAN women’s economic marginalisation in the face of greater economic integration among member states.<sup>65</sup> More to the point, the economic insecurities enforced and exacerbated through ASEAN regionalisation remain neglected from discussions of collective security. And

62 Davies, ‘Women and Development, Not Gender and Politics’.

63 Davies, Nackers and Teitt, ‘Women, Peace and Security as an ASEAN priority,’ p. 342.

64 Attilio Pisanò, ‘Towards an ASEAN human rights mechanism: the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children,’ *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 20/3 (2016), p. 327.

65 Tanyag, ‘Sexual & Gender based violence’.

yet, they constitute the vast forms of violence including poverty and exploitation sustained in ‘everyday life’.

Advancing a broader understanding of gender and violence – beyond the current paternalistic, or conservative view in ASEAN – is contingent on reconceptualising the recent albeit foundational ideas of ASEAN as constituted by three distinct community pillars. This is certainly a daunting but not an impossible task for ASEAN. Veneracion-Rallonza, for instance, identifies the institutional entry points for advancing WPS in ASEAN. First, this can occur via AICHR and ACWC given their shared mandate “to develop strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms” and to “develop policies, programs and innovative strategies to promote and protect the rights of women and children” respectively.<sup>66</sup> Second, through ‘horizontal and vertical norm entrepreneurship’ key member states such as the Philippines can instigate norm adoption and implementation among member states, as well as across the range of ASEAN institutions and mechanisms. Indeed, she further highlights how seven ASEAN member states namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines have already expressed their support for the 2013 UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.<sup>67</sup> This commitment, she notes, included sending High-level government delegations to attend the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in the UK.<sup>68</sup>

Given this recent progress, I argue that ASEAN’s limited engagement with WPS is perhaps increasingly less a function of ‘inherent’ conservatism as others have argued, and more reflective of globally prevalent institutional constraints that sever the political-military from the socio-economic, and as well as of the gendered ideologies that shape or justify this separation. In particular, it is the siloing of the ASEAN community pillars that prevents from comprehensively advancing a feminist continuum of violence perspective which is a requisite for sustainable peace. This distinction is important in order to acknowledge the ways by which ASEAN bodies such as the ACWC have actively attempted to create spaces for CSOs to redefine ASEAN’s collective security.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, it is precisely through the siloing of ASEAN’s community pillars that the

66 Veneracion-Rallonza, ‘Building the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the ASEAN through Multi-Focal Norm Entrepreneurship,’ p. 176

67 Ibid, p. 174.

68 Ibid.

69 Tanyag, ‘Sexual & Gender based violence’; see also Veneracion-Rallonza ‘Building the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the ASEAN through Multi-Focal Norm Entrepreneurship.’

so-called ‘ASEAN Way’ – or the privileging of non-interference and consensus building – continues to be regarded as fundamental to regional peace and security thereby potentially undermining broader advancement in WPS-R2P norm promotion.<sup>70</sup> So long as ‘women’s concerns’ and gender remain institutionally severed or neglected from the political-security pillar – as in women are primarily referred to under the ACWC and the socio-cultural pillar, then we cannot likely expect to see broader groups of women participating in peace, conflict and human rights decision-making in ASEAN. Relatedly, we are also less likely to achieve any fundamental rethinking on regional peace and security that recognises the political agency of broader groups of women and girls in ASEAN. Building on this critique, I now examine the RPA on ERAW which I identify as another pathway for promoting a gender-sensitive agenda on human protection and atrocities prevention. In the next section, I briefly outline how the RPA can serve as a vector not only for advancing WPS and R2P in the region, but also for rethinking the three-pillars to comprehensively end SGBV and promote gender equality as a cross-cutting issue that all ASEAN communities must address.

#### *Regional Plan of Action on ERAW as a Vector for WPS and R2P*

On 9 October 2013, ASEAN member states adopted the Declaration on the elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children.<sup>71</sup> The ASEAN Declaration on the elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children is significant because it explicitly references UNSC Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889 that collectively comprise the framework for the global WPS agenda. At the same time, it reaffirms ASEAN member states’ commitments to other gender equality instruments such as CEDAW, the Declaration on the elimination of Violence against Women (Vienna Declaration), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and succeeding outcome documents as well as the now concluded Millennium Development Goals. The declaration in this regard is thus moored, although not explicitly, to an understanding that violence against women occurs in securitised settings of armed conflict which falls within the ambit of WPS agenda; and is also part of a wider issue of gender equality as addressed extensively by the other gender equality instruments such as CEDAW. Furthermore, the declaration states that

<sup>70</sup> Davies, Nackers and Teitt, ‘Women, Peace and Security as an ASEAN priority’, p. 343.

<sup>71</sup> I note that the one declaration actually ‘lumps together’ Violence against Women and Violence against Children. A distinct RPA has been developed however for each one.

violence against women and violence against children occur irrespective of the stages of the life cycle, whether at home, in school, in the workplace, in public or private spaces (including cyber space) as a result of gender bias, discriminatory and harmful traditional practices and must be eliminated as they impair human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children.

It goes on to also identify specific groups of women such as: ‘women and children particularly for those who are in vulnerable situations’, ‘women and children in disasters, women and children in armed conflict, women and children in refugee camps, women and children on the move, stateless women and children, migrant women and children, women and children belonging to ethnic and/or indigenous groups.’ Finally, through the declaration, ASEAN member states commit to ‘strengthen a *holistic, multi-disciplinary approach* to promote the rights of women and children and adopt a gender responsive, child sensitive, and age-responsive approach to eliminate violence against women and violence against children in the region.’<sup>72</sup> This includes creating ‘an enabling environment for the participation of women and children, including victims/survivors, in the prevention and elimination of violence against women and violence against children.’

The yoking together of women and children in the declaration draws on narratives of vulnerability and protection stereotypes that may contradict efforts to promote the political agency of broader groups of women and girls in ASEAN. Nevertheless, the declaration at least in principle already aligns with the core goals of WPS and R2P in terms of prevention, protection and participation. It can therefore serve as an important normative starting point for discussing peace and security in ASEAN which views violence as occurring in a continuum. That is, experiences of violence are not just ‘contained’ in crisis settings where the R2P and WPS are salient but also as interconnected with broader issues of gender equality and human rights before, during and after crises where CEDAW, BpFA and the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are applicable frameworks. In terms of ASEAN’s structure, this means prevention of SGBV and the promotion of women’s political and economic rights are equal concerns for the political-security and economic pillars, and not just that of the socio-cultural pillar and the ACWC specifically. Thus, even as ASEAN currently lacks a ‘specialised’ regional action plan on WPS, the recently developed RPA on ERAW can potentially serve as a vector towards building a

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<sup>72</sup> Emphasis mine.

more inclusive and lasting peace in the region. Indeed, the RPA on EVAW is important because while the Philippines is the only country thus far that has created a WPS national action plan, all ASEAN member states have signed and ratified CEDAW.<sup>73</sup> More to the point, what the RPA on EVAW actually presents is an opportunity to overcome ongoing regional and national level challenges around the promotion of WPS by a recourse to the shared regional commitment of all ASEAN member states to uphold gender equality.

The RPA covers a ten-year period coinciding with the ASEAN Community Blueprint for 2016–2025.<sup>74</sup> It is intended to provide concrete strategies for the effective implementation of the declaration at regional and national levels. Under *Section VII. Policy Statement and Ultimate Goal*, it stipulates that ‘ASEAN has a policy of zero tolerance for all forms of VAW. Recognizing VAW as a violation of human rights, ASEAN is determined to eliminate all forms of VAW as a matter of priority.’ The ACWC and ACW – although both subsumed within the socio-cultural pillar of ASEAN – jointly developed the plan in close partnership with regional and national-level CSOs. The RPA to this end explicitly sets out the key role of CSOs as partners and collaborators in ending all forms of violence against women and children in ASEAN. Crucially, the RPA has opened opportunities for promoting women’s political participation that is consistent with WPS goals. For instance, Action 2, paragraph 18 as well as other reinforcing sections in the RPA, call upon member states to ‘incorporate the prevention of and response to all forms of VAW into the planning and delivery of disaster risk reduction programs and protocols as well as in all humanitarian responses following natural disasters, conflict situations, or other emergencies (national and regional levels).’

The RPA presents an opportunity to potentially bridge the protection gap engendered by a ‘pillars approach’ in ASEAN. For example, the first of the two listed objectives of the RPA is ‘for ASEAN to institutionalise EVAW policies and sustained support across pillars and sectors.’ Similarly, under *Section V. Guiding Principles for Development and Implementation of the ASEAN RPA on EVAW*, it expressly stipulates that ‘the impact of VAW cuts across all the three pillars of ASEAN economic, political-security and socio-cultural, and all three pillars are similarly committed to ending such violence.’ In addition, under Action 7,

73 See ACWC TOR, <http://www.asean.org/storage/images/archive/documents/TOR-ACWC.pdf> accessed 31 August 2016.

74 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women (ASEAN RPA on EVAW) (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, February 2016), <http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Final-ASEAN-RPA-on-EVAW-IJP-11.02.2016-as-input-ASEC.pdf> accessed 31 August 2016.

paragraph 59, it lists the need to ‘establish and/or strengthen coordination strategies between the three ASEAN pillars to end VAW, and support the effective delivery of a multi-sectoral prevention and response to VAW across all sectors (national and regional levels).’ These provisions are pivotal as they specifically name the ASEAN community pillars as a point of engagement which can be re-interpreted to address the continuum between everyday gendered inequalities and violence, and conflict-related SGBV. This is pertinent again in the case of Southeast Asia where for instance as Davies, True and Tanyag point out, ‘SGBV is an effective form of political and economic violence that exacerbates gender and other material inequalities and grievances.’<sup>75</sup> It is precisely the varying levels of state fragility in Southeast Asia that renders multiply-marginalised women and girls in the region as primary targets of egregious violence which often also go unreported and therefore perpetrated with impunity.<sup>76</sup>

### Conclusion

For norm promotion on human protection and atrocities prevention to fully integrate and benefit broader groups of women and girls in ASEAN, it must be underpinned by the introspective scrutiny of the current silos that define ASEAN’s three community pillars. Critical feminist research have demonstrated the strong gender alignments between WPS and R2P in terms of their shared goals on prevention, protection and participation. However, integrating the two must not detract from attaining comprehensive gender equality goals such as those embodied in CEDAW, BpFA and SDGs. This means pre-existing gendered inequalities must be equally addressed with conflict-related SGBV. Attaining ‘immediate’ political and military goals to protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities are equally important and mutually reinforcing with establishing long-term socio-cultural and economic reforms post-crisis. Thus, deepening ASEAN’s engagement with WPS and R2P must be anchored upon a feminist continuum of violence which renders visible the connections between physical, structural and symbolic forms; across political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions; and the gender dynamics within families and kinship or ethnic networks, at level of the state, in ASEAN’s ‘three pillars’, and globally.

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75 Davies, True and Tanyag, ‘How women’s silence secures the peace: analysing sexual and gender-based violence in a low-intensity conflict’, p. 461.

76 Ibid.

Concretising the RPA on E<sub>VAW</sub> entails an explicit avoidance of the pitfalls associated with taking violence in securitised settings as separate from culturally-embedded and emergent forms of violence as ASEAN deals with continued crises such as internal conflicts and disasters. This is achieved by progressively narrowing the institutional divides and policy gaps across the political-security, economic and socio-cultural community pillars. It is therefore integral for various stakeholders to engage the RPA on E<sub>VAW</sub> in this direction. As I have argued here, a clear starting point is in the progressive inclusion of gender under the political-security and economic pillars. Crucially, the goals envisioned under the RPA on E<sub>VAW</sub> are consistent with the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision whereby member states reaffirmed their commitment "to identifying the best approaches to address emerging challenges, and respond effectively to the shifting regional geo-economics and geo-politics, especially in relation to peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region and beyond."<sup>77</sup>

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77 Chairman's Statement of the 25th ASEAN Summit: "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community", Nay Pyi Taw, 12 November 2014, [http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/pdf/2014\\_upload/Chairman%20Statement%20of%20the%2025th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf](http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/pdf/2014_upload/Chairman%20Statement%20of%20the%2025th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf), accessed 6 April 2017.