Assessing the Impact, Evolution, and Future of the WPS Framework

Capstone Presentation

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OVERVIEW

This report assesses 25 years of U.S. engagement with the Women and Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, focusing on how WPS has been institutionalized through Gender Advisors, WPS Advisors, and related roles across government. Drawing on interviews and policy analysis, it offers a starting point for policymakers to understand these roles, recognize how WPS strengthens national and global security, and identify opportunities to build a more resilient infrastructure that fully supports the integration of WPS across U.S. diplomatic, defense, and development operations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The U.S. has made measurable progress institutionalizing Women and Peace and Security through Gender and WPS Advisor roles across agencies.
- The immediate future of WPS will be defined by the framework's resilient ability to adapt to changing contexts.
- WPS in the realm of national security and defense must be made operational and relevant to the institutions that it is seeking to bolster.
- Civil society remains a key driver of WPS progress but often operates without sufficient collaboration or recognition from government institutions.
- Sustainable progress requires real legislative momentum and cross-sector dialogues in legislative institutions to better understand and promote the benefits of WPS lenses.
- Country-wide buy-in on the WPS framework, its benefits, and the lenses that it espouses is necessary for the long-term operationalization of WPS

TERMINOLOGY

When learning about the intricacies of how the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 came to be, we had the opportunity to speak to Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, who chaired the UN Security Council when UNSCR 1325 was initially introduced to the UN. Ambassador Chowdhury critiques the separation of S from Women, Peace and Security as well by pointing out that in the agenda's name, *"women is on one side, [and] peace and security [are] on the other side."*[1] While the comma in Women, Peace and Security was not an intentional grammatical mechanism to separate women from the field of security, it has removed emphasis on how all three components are integral. *"We want women to be related to peace and security as a compact,"* as this shapes how we comprehensively implement WPS objectives. We will use the locution Women and Peace and Security when we speak of WPS; however, existing names using the original terminology will not be changed.

WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

At its core, WPS asserts that national security is a domain belonging to both men and women in society. WPS is a framework firmly concerned with ensuring that every male and every female can act and meaningfully participate in the assurance of their individual security through participation in matters of national interest.[2] WPS is fundamentally rooted in the idea that women, as constituents of half of the global population, must be represented at all levels of governance, peacemaking, and conflict prevention and resolution. *"You cannot achieve a meaningful peace without including half the population of any country."*[3] WPS posits that male and female members of society must both have *"agency and a say in how their world works,"* as well as *"the right to creation of"*[4] the systems and institutions that govern daily life. It also contends that "the fate of nations is tied to the status of women."[5] As such, domestic issues that affect the daily wellbeing of women within a country also have a ripple effect on a country's ability to develop, prosper, and pursue its national security.

The WPS framework also contends that the status of women is inextricably linked to state security and stability, with extensive quantitative evidence demonstrating that women's participation in peace processes reduces the risk of war, enhances the durability of peace, and fosters overall security. As Cornelia Weiss asserted in her interview, in no uncertain terms, *"if you want insecurity, go ahead and exclude women… If you want war, then discriminate against women… If you want a weaker military, then exclude women… If you want to be poor, then you keep women down."*[6] These assertions make up the backbone of the argument of why WPS is so important at a national level.

Research shows that when women are included at the negotiating table, the likelihood of a peace agreement enduring for 15 years increases by 35%.[7] Furthermore, a study of 58 conflict-affected states between 1980 and 2003 found that when 35% of the legislature is female, the risk of conflict relapse is nearly zero.[8] Women's presence in peace negotiations increases inclusivity, transparency, and sustainability by forging connections across opposing factions.[9] One reason for this is that women, particularly mothers, often have a different perspective than men. Dr. John Mathiason (2025) notes that there is *"some evidence that women leaders are more future oriented than men leaders."*[10] Mothers are more likely to be concerned about their children's future, as well as future generations, which expands their perspective from focusing solely on issues that impact a singular, short-term moment. Additionally, studies show that a country's level of peace is more closely correlated with the status of its women than with GDP, religion, or democracy.[11] Countries that uphold gender equality and provide women with equal opportunities are more likely to sustain long-term peace compared to those that suppress women's rights.[12]

WPS is also highly conscious of the notion that women are not impacted by conflict the same way that men are. Women move through the world differently than men, which means that they interact with security and insecurity in intimately different ways from men, which creates a perspective that has not historically been considered in peace or security processes. Consequently, Hannah Proctor (2025) argues that *"it's not that women are magically more peaceful than men,"* but rather that *"women have a different perspective"*[13] which can positively contribute to peace. Women's different lived experiences through conflict allow them to bring valuable perspectives to peace processes, often ones that advocate for addressing broader human rights concerns and social inequalities that contribute to conflict-driving instability.[14]

While quantitative findings underscore the strategic imperative of women's participation in peace processes, beyond empirical evidence the inclusion of women is also a matter of justice and fundamental rights—ensuring that the whole population, not just half, has a voice in decisions that shape post-conflict societies. Women's involvement ensures that the issues uniquely affecting women during conflicts, such as gender-based violence and post-conflict economic marginalization, receive the attention they deserve.[15]

In addition to enduring the physical and psychological trauma of war, women assume critical post-conflict roles in rebuilding communities, caring for the injured, and stabilizing households amidst widespread socio-economic challenges such as food scarcity, unemployment, and declining morale.[16] This important work further underscores the necessity of women's participation in peacebuilding, not only to mitigate the consequences of conflict, but also to ensure that future peace is resilient and inclusive. To neglect women's perspectives in these processes is to diminish the distinctive impact that conflict has on them and forgoes opportunities for more comprehensive, enduring solutions to violence and instability.

WPS is not pertinent to only women, but to all people, from a personal security level all the way to the level of the international system. Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury emphasized that *"women bring important and different skills and perspectives to the policy making table in comparison to their male counterparts. Women's equality and participation makes our planet safe and secure"* by using all potential and leaving no one behind. Women's equality and empowerment is *"relevant for humanity as a whole, for all of us. Without peace, development is impossible, and without development, peace is not achievable. But, without women, neither peace nor development is conceivable."*[17]

UNSCR 1325

The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was debated during an open UN Security Council session under Namibian presidency where the council members acknowledged the disproportionate impact of war on women and the negative impact of the continual exclusion of women's voices from peace discussions. Even though several nations, such as Russia and China, had initial reservations about the removal of women's issues from domestic affairs potentially interfering with state sovereignty, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 passed unanimously on October 31st, 2000.[18] The resolution specifically addresses how women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent conflict and war and recognizes the critical role that women can and already do play in peacebuilding efforts. UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, and in the forging of lasting peace.

UNSCR 1325 was groundbreaking in its recognition of women as both "victims and agents of conflict."[19] This dual acknowledgement—encapsulated in its four foundational pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and relief/recovery—set the stage for a transformative shift in how the international community approached gender in conflict. UNSCR 1325 commits Member States to the support of women's initiatives, increased women's representation throughout the UN system, providing Member States with training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights, and needs of women as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures.[20] UN Member States are called upon to adopt a gendered perspective in peacekeeping operations; implement gender training for all military and civilian peacekeepers; account for the special needs of women and girls

during conflict and post-conflict reconstruction; increase women's participation in conflict prevention, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction; and to prosecute perpetrators of gender-based war crimes.

While UNSCR 1325 encouraged the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) to operationalize its principles, the resolution itself contained no binding enforcement mechanisms. As a result, the extent and effectiveness of implementation varied significantly across Member States. In general, these NAPs were meant to outline the actionable steps a government plans to take to implement the core objectives of the WPS framework.[21] Additionally, NAPs were also meant to bridge the gap between the broader commitments laid out in UNSCR 1325 and the concrete state-specific steps outlined for government and civil societies. Ambassador Chowdhury noted that *"national action plans are important because they can engage civil society with the government."[22]* Every key actor is given guidelines for steps to take, and how they can effectively collaborate in implementing UNSCR 1325. However, without strong enforcement mechanisms, many countries have failed in adopting and/or maintaining their own NAPs. As of 2025, 108 out of 193 UN Member States have adopted at least one NAP since 2000.[23]
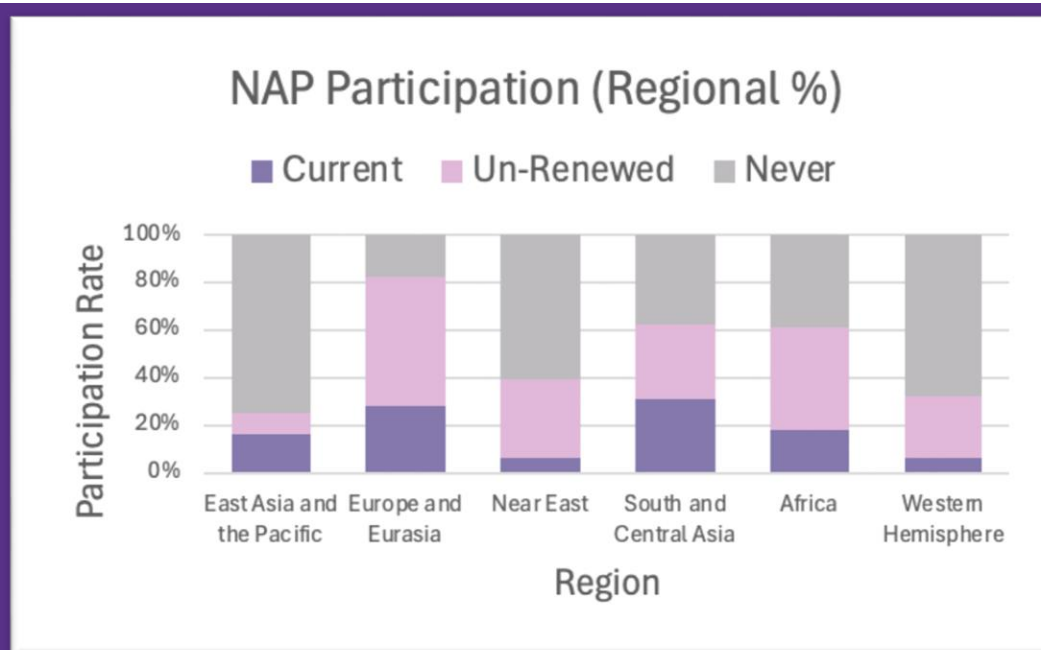
NATIONAL ACTION PLANS.

Figure 1: NAP Participation by Regional Percentage

Following the US Department of State's Countries and Areas List, six geographic regions have been identified: (Sub-Saharan) Africa; East Asia and the Pacific; Europe and Eurasia; Near East (Middle East and Northern Africa); South and Central Asia; and Western Hemisphere. Out of the 197 countries recognized by the Department of State, 35 have a current NAP, 70 have had a NAP at some point but have not renewed said NAPs, and 92 have never had a NAP.[24] The East Asia and the Pacific region have the largest proportion of states that have never adopted a NAP (75%). The Europe and Eurasia region has the smallest proportion of states that have never adopted a NAP (18%) but it also has the largest

proportion of states that have unrenewed NAPs (54%). There is no region that is comprised of more than 31% of its states retaining a current NAP, and their percentages are approximated as follows: Near East (5.56%), Western Hemisphere (5.71%), East Asia and the Pacific (15.63%), Africa (18.37%), Europe and Eurasia (28%), and South and Central Asia (30.77%).
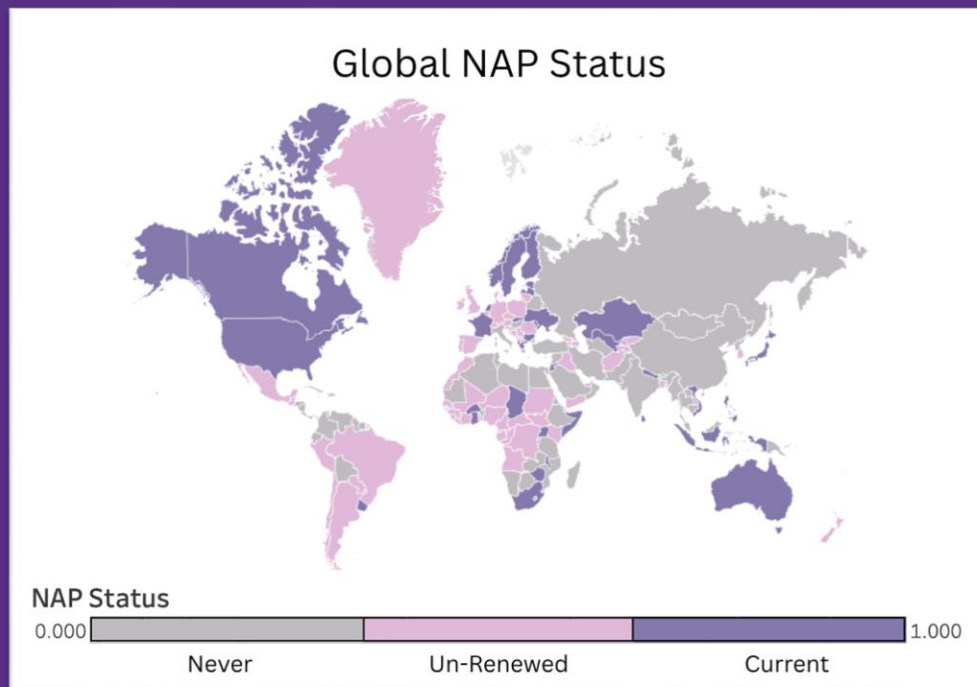

Figure 2: Global Map of NAP Status

WPS in the United States

While UNSCR 1325 represented the initial blueprint for advancing women's participation in peace and security processes, the responsibility for planning and implementation falls upon the Member States themselves. As the WPS framework gained international recognition and legitimacy, more countries began to adopt NAPs to work towards integrating gender analysis into their domestic and foreign policies. The United States did not pass its first NAP for eleven years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325; in a way, the U.S.'s NAP adoption lagged behind other countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, England, Switzerland, Belgium. The United States' first NAP on WPS was announced by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in October of 2010, and it was officially signed into policy by President Barack Obama in December of 2011.[25]

US NAPs for WPS picked up momentum from that moment on. Three additional NAPs were passed in 2015, 2019, and 2023, and WPS was codified into law in 2017 under the first Trump administration via the WPS Act. This was the first time in history that any country in the world signed WPS into law. To ensure accountability for the agencies tasked with the implementation of WPS, each is required to submit their own implementation plan, which outlines the specific actions that will be taken to achieve the NAP's objectives. After 2017, these reports were provided both to Congress and the National Security Council.

To assess the effectiveness of the U.S. NAPs, the following section examines these implementation plans by separate U.S. agencies as well as the National Security Council Reports on agency-specific implementation plans to assess the extent to which goals were achieved.

The WPS Act of 2017

Under the first Trump administration, the WPS Act was officially signed into law, making the U.S. the first country to establish a law on WPS.[26] This groundbreaking move set the U.S. apart from all others and set a new standard for the consideration of WPS as a core framework for peace. Unique to any other legislative WPS initiative in the world, *"it was signed into law by President Trump during his first term. And that was something really good that came out of the first administration, something that enjoyed and hopefully still enjoys in some way wide bipartisan support. It's what spurred the creation of the WPS caucus, which is only the second body of legislators outside of Japan that are dedicated to WPS."[27]*

The law required the President to submit a government-wide strategy to Congress no later than one year after the enactment of the Act.[28] After the first submission, an updated strategy was mandated to be submitted every four years thereafter. Key government agencies were tasked with WPS implementation, including USAID, DOS, DOD, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and any other agency specified by the President.[29] These departments and agencies are required to submit a specific implementation plan that reports their anticipated contributions and efforts to carry out the strategy.[30] This enhanced accountability by ensuring that all relevant agencies were being held responsible for following the actions outlined in the NAPs. The WPS Act sought to enshrine WPS principles in US law, as the U.S. committed to integrating gender perspectives into U.S. foreign policy, defense, and development.

While the Act heavily depended on civil society consultation to shape it at the beginning, many of *"the 'shalls' got turned into 'mays' in the later version"* that was signed.[31] This made the law less enforceable and minimized its power to hold agencies accountable. The adoption of the Act also shows a shift from

WPS as an agenda that is no longer *"rooted in civil society activism anymore, [instead,] it's rooted in the 2017 Act."[32]* This is especially apparent through the fact that the Act *"never mentions anywhere that 1325 is a UN resolution."[33]* Recognition is not actively offered to civil society and other actors that were central to the creation of the WPS framework. The level of trust between actors is now fragile, leading to a lack of open discussions and a weakened ability to solidify a path for the future of WPS.

The language in the Act also *"indicates a lack of internal prioritization by the nation"* as it expects each agency to change its structure and accommodate change without providing real resources.[34] Each agency is expected to follow through with the propositions of the Act, yet funding to support them was not prioritized. This points to the need for the U.S. to look internally and re-examine how we implement WPS in our own country versus abroad. While the U.S.'s creation of WPS legislation is a powerful step, it lacks teeth without actually equipping actors and agencies with the necessary resources. *"The implementation [of the Act] has really…sidelined some of its goals,"* and it is unclear *"what the current administration is going to do about WPS."[35]*

Despite the challenges of the WPS Act of 2017's lack of strong enforcement power, it is incredibly significant as it makes the U.S. the *"first country to actually legislate and mandate [UNSCR] 1325."[36]* The U.S. set *"the stage for the entire world on what a legislation that actually implements 1325 looks like,"* creating a strong example for countries to follow.[37] The 2017 Act also acts as a hook for civil society organizations working to implement WPS to expand upon to *"give some kind of direction to the executive branch to do the various things that it [needs] to do."[38]* Even though the Act of 2017 ultimately sidelined civil society, it provided WPS with a level of security as the Act enshrined WPS principles into U.S. law.

WPS 2.0

As we mark 25 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, it is essential to reflect on the lessons of the past and look ahead to a future where WPS is implemented in a more robust, practical, and meaningful way across American institutions. Accounting for the critique that WPS can feel inaccessible, due to a lack of tangible outputs and actionable tenets, the remainder of this report is dedicated to the exploration of real action and measures that can be taken by different entities of the U.S. Government to operationalize WPS. To that end, the recommendations are organized by institutions: the DOD, the U.S. Congress, the DOS, and DHS. This structure allows us to assess the current state of WPS engagement within each institution and propose specific, actionable strategies for the next two years.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

One of the most prevalent issues we see in the implementation of WPS is the push back it receives from the agencies required to implement it. It can oftentimes be interpreted as a political initiative or an effort at establishing politically correct policies, rather than being seen for what it truly is—an additional angle of analysis. This is happening even now as the Secretary of Defense announced on April 29th his intention to only execute the bare minimum required of the DOD regarding WPS and, over time, remove funding for those initiatives in the DOD budget (Mitchell, 2025). As such, it is more important now than ever to make sure that the operationalization of WPS is specific to the institutional context so that it is operationalizable at a tactical level. The following section of this report will explore how WPS can better fit DOD norms and operations to increase operational success.

Within the DOD, wargaming is a crucial aspect of planning and providing for defense. Within game theory, blue and red teams are used to represent defensive teams and opposing teams, where the blue team plans how it might defend itself against supposed attacks from the red team while analyzing intelligence gathered regarding the red team's capabilities and willingness to engage with the blue team.

What game theory does not always acknowledge is the existence and necessary recognition of a purple team. The Purple Team is not the adversarial strategies of the red team or the defensive capabilities of the blue team, but rather, information outside of traditional enemy-focused intelligence to which the blue team is not paying attention. The purple team exposes blind spots to the blue team that studying the red team's strategies never can provide. As Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini (2025) has stated, *"if we're sending delegations to deal with really complex issues, are we sending the dream team…are we drawing on the best knowledge and the best expertise of our pluralistic diverse citizenry experts in this field? Or are we going to the same old guys? And then we wonder, gosh, why is nothing changing?"*[39]

There are countless ways the United States Government (USG) seeks to fill positions on their purple team without even realizing they have one; legal counselors, subject matter experts, and even the national security council are all examples of individuals and organizations relied on to supply information to

decision makers in times of need. The information provided by the members of the purple team is crucial to mission success. To put it simply, the Purple Team is tasked with bringing information to the table that the blue team doesn't know they are missing. As Brenda Oppermann (2025) puts it, *"you need to know where your enemies are and where your allies are. You always have to know both sides. And women are involved in both sides."*[40] One of the most crucial pieces of information a purple team can offer is insight into **where the women are.**

To this end, we recommend taking the following actions for the Department of Defense:

1. Establish WPS expertise as a permanent component of the Purple Team across USG agencies, particularly within DOD.

To address persistent blind spots in mission planning and threat analysis, WPS experts should be recognized as integral members of the Purple Team, providing nontraditional security insights that standard enemy-focused intelligence cannot capture. WPS experts can identify critical vulnerabilities, such as human trafficking routes or the role of women in insurgencies, enhancing operational effectiveness and mission resilience.

> *"It only takes one suicide bomber to ruin your day. And if you don't see her coming, you have a big problem." (Brenda Oppermann, 2025)*

2. Rebrand and expand the GENAD career field by creating a secondary specialty track open to officers and enlisted personnel.

To mitigate a potential dismissal of WPS principles at face value, we suggest the adoption of the title "Human Security Advisor" or "HSA" in favor of the currently used "GENAD." This is to emphasize that WPS initiatives are concerned with human security as a whole, and not just

women's security, as gendered lenses can often be stereotyped. Gender applies to both men and women, and taking both perspectives into account is necessary for ensuring human security.

A subsequent expansion of the new HSA career field is recommended, following the successful model of the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program, the HSA position should be expanded as a secondary career field that service members can apply into after several years of service. This approach will grow the WPS talent pipeline without diverting personnel away from their original career tracks, ensuring that gender analysis expertise is available at all levels of command.

3. Develop a WPS Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) to broaden gender analysis expertise across military occupational fields.

In addition to a dedicated GENAD career field, the DOD should create an ASI tab for gender analysis, like other specialized skills like Airborne or Ranger training. This will allow personnel across diverse fields: infantry, intelligence, aviation, public affairs, to integrate WPS principles into daily operations without requiring a full career change, vastly expanding WPS integration in practice.

4. Publish an official DOD-wide doctrine or instruction on WPS to institutionalize its implementation.

Given DOD's reliance on formal doctrine to drive behavior, a dedicated WPS instruction or doctrinal publication should be issued. Currently, there has yet to be any DOD-wide doctrine or instruction published on WPS. A DOD doctrine on WPS will make the implementation of WPS principles a requirement that must be adhered to by commanders, dictated through a line of communication that is familiar and credible to servicemembers, rather than documents published across all government agencies, which can feel distant from the DOD for many service members.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Considering organizational changes at the Department of State, the following steps are recommended to ensure the sustainability and operationalization of the WPS agenda:

1. Archive and safeguard S/GWI knowledge products through independent or partnered repositories

The archiving of information on the S/GWI site as well as the resources, reports, and publications generated by this office is imperative to ensure the preservations of knowledge and resources on WPS. This will ensure that valuable information—which has been created and published under a WPS lens—is not lost and is able to continue to function as a resource for civil society and other interest groups seeking to engage more substantially with WPS.

The archiving of this information could be completed by using archive sites. Alternatively, S/GWI could migrate some of this material to sites managed by Civil Society Working Groups (CSWGs) or other NGOs, privately funded foundations, and think tanks such as the International Peace Institute, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security (GIWPS), Women in International Security (WIIS), or Our Secure Future (OSF). This not only protects access to information regarding WPS, but also potentially opens the door for further engagement with non-governmental groups and organizations with a vested interest in the resilience of WPS.

2. Expand alliances with private sector champions to strengthen WPS resilience.

WPS as a framework has had incredible champions across its 25 years of history, and that is something that must continue to be capitalized upon as a new era of gender in government commences. The Department has the opportunity to proactively build and formalize partnerships with philanthropists and private sector leaders committed to women's empowerment, such as Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott, to bolster the continuity of WPS initiatives. With assistance from NGOs and individuals with an interest in women's advancement and WPS, the opportunity of consolidating federal WPS efforts outside of the DOS becomes a real possibility. Members of S/GWI, and other federal agencies with ties to WPS, could have the opportunity to organize and meet outside of the scope of their professional careers so as to continue generating momentum for WPS initiatives that might be put on hold via executive order in the near future.

3. Engage and empower WPS allies across the DOS bureaucracy.

Even without a dedicated office, WPS principles can persist by activating "friends of WPS" within different bureaus of the State Department. Now that there is a real sense of urgency in terms of scrambling for endurance, it is a good time to reach out across the DOS to capitalize on the existing bureaucratic champions of WPS who may be willing to lend a helping hand in S/GWI's efforts to remain within the DOS, to migrate and save important WPS documents to archives, or even to help make connections with non-government entities with an interest in the preservation of WPS. S/GWI and its partners can seed awareness and train allies across the department to integrate WPS principles into their respective portfolios, ensuring the framework endures across missions and offices.

4. Encourage a continuance of WPS education

Finally, it is crucial that programs remain in place to ensure the continuance of education on WPS for future generations. The momentum of the Women and Peace and Security agenda must continue and shape the way individual and national security are approached, and a constant educational foundation can be a source of generational resilience. To this end, we at the WPS program at the Bush School of Government and Public Service are prepared and willing to continue to provide WPS education to future public servants, and we will continue to do so for as long as is necessary while we wait for public and private institutions to realize once more the importance of the WPS framework.

Please refer to the full report to find further details on actions recommended for the DOS in case of S/GWI continuity within the DOS.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

While decisive government action can immediately impact the dissemination and operationalization of WPS in a positive way, we must understand that the general public must be knowledgeable about WPS in order for it to succeed and be a force for positive change going forward. One of the biggest failures of WPS is that *"we haven't done a very good job pitching it to explain why it's important. The less secure women are within a country, the less secure that country is,"[41]* yet WPS has not emphasized this in a way that is graspable by the average American constituent. To address this, we seek to educate the American public on why both men and women must be involved in domestic security matters.

It must be acknowledged that the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties—the DHS office charged with implementing WPS—is in the process of being reduced,[42] but this could be a new opportunity to further utilize DHS's Office of Homeland Security Situational Awareness (OSA). The OSA houses the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3), whose mission is to "strengthen our country's ability to prevent targeted violence and terrorism nationwide through funding, education, training, evidence-based resources, increased public awareness, and strategic partnerships across every level of government, the private sector, and in local communities."[43] The CP3 maps out multiple levels of prevention escalation in order to demonstrate the different ways in which it can engage with its strategic partnerships—such as

engaging with school administrators in order to create social cohesion programming as a means of fostering resilient communities.[44] Additionally, CP3 is composed of a diverse staff—from fields including academia, communication, community engagement, military service, public health, and violence prevention—who can create a comprehensive perspective for the public awareness campaign.[45]

The following are identified as issues that are both relevant to the average American and as having a significant WPS component:

1. Incel violence and violent extremism.

Finally, a DHS media campaign has the opportunity to inform the general population, as well as law enforcement and homeland security agencies across the country, about the relationship between "incels," misogynistic language, and the incidence of violent extremism. The term "incel" is short for "involuntary celibate," and it refers to men who are part of an online community whose identity is constructed around a perceived inability to secure a sexual partner.[46]

It's important to note two things about inceldom: 1) that its progression and radicalization process is deeply characterized by the use of misogynistic language in online forums, and 2) that the intensification of association with incel ideology is facilitated by online echo chambers of increasingly radical rhetoric related to a radical definition of manhood. The end of the radicalization process of the incel is marked by an individual incel's perception that perpetrating acts of violence is an acceptable form of rebellion against social hierarchies that put the individual incel at a disadvantage in the race for

securing a partner. Women, in the worldview of the incel, are to blame for the incel's inability to secure a partner, and as such women are the target of these acts of violent extremism.

It's really important to acknowledge that not all incels will become perpetrators of violent extremism, but if we fail to consider misogynistic speech towards women as a red flag for individuals who may commit acts of violent extremism, we will suffer from a gendered blind spot that could hinder homeland security efforts to prevent acts of violence extremism.[47] Interaction with incel forums, as well as the chronic use of misogynistic language, must be considered units of analyses for law enforcement to prevent violent extremism on American soil.

The use of this misogynistic speech is, as demonstrated through research, indicative of a strong willingness to commit acts of violence. The WPS lens, in this instance, posits that violent speech against women should be taken as a unit of analysis in the fight against violent extremism. DHS has the opportunity to break into the echo chambers that usher men to progress through this pipeline by offering and presenting information that is counter to this assertion that it is acceptable to use violence as a means to rebel or protest against perceived hierarchical orders.

2. Domestic violence and the relationship to mass shooting events

Between 2014-2019, 59.1% of U.S. mass shootings were DV-related, and 68.2% involved a perpetrator with a history of domestic violence (Geller, Booty & Crifasi, 2021)

Mass shooting events have become part of the social consciousness of the average American in our current era of widespread media coverage. The issue of mass shootings has become increasingly politicized in partisan arguments about gun reform and gun control; however, widening the scope of law enforcement's knowledge of the relationship between Domestic Violence (DV) and the incidence of mass shootings by using a WPS lens can be an important analytical component to the future prevention of mass shooting events.

As can be seen by the two figures below, the relationship between domestic violence and mass shootings is one that should not be ignored by DHS nor by the American people.
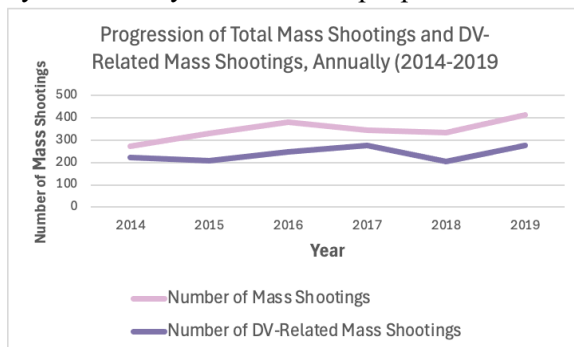

Figure 3: Trendlines of Total Mass Shootings and of Domestic Violence-Related Mass Shootings, Annually (2014-2019)
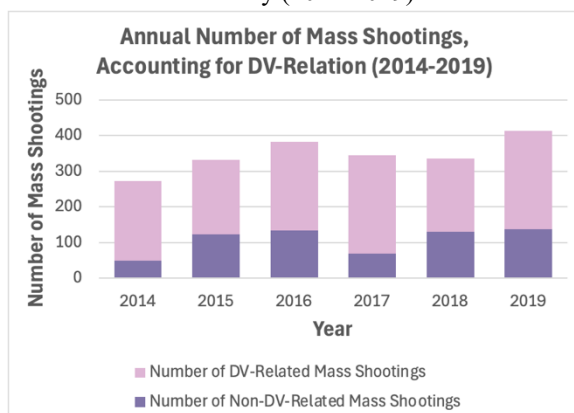

Figure 4: Annual Number of Mass Shootings, Accounting for Domestic Violence Related Events (2014-2019)

Both of these graphs point to a large number of mass shooting events that are related to domestic violence incidence. While it isn't possible to predict if someone with a history of domestic violence will become a mass shooter—because there are vastly more domestic abusers than there are mass shooters—DV is still a major risk factor for future violence, including escalation to homicide and mass shootings.[48] (Huff-Corzine & Marvell, 2021). This is the kind of relationship that would be difficult to see without the use of a WPS lens in matters of homeland security. Helping both homeland security institutions and the American people see through these lenses to analyze relevant indicators can help better tackle violence prevention in the future and can help inform early warning systems to bolster homeland security initiatives.

3. Maternal mortality as a homeland security imperative

UNICEF data puts the United States Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in 2020 at 21 deaths per 100,000 live births.[49] While this does not, at face value, seem like a terrible MMR, it puts the United States at 66th out of 185 countries which make up this dataset. This makes the U.S. the lowest-ranking OECD country in terms of maternal mortality. The American people must understand that having such a high MMR has consequences on both individuals and the nation, which is something that can only be accomplished by employing the WPS lens in this DHS-led media campaign.

At an individual security level, it is outrageous how many women in the U.S. are dying from preventable childbirth-related reasons, and we are not using the full extent of our resources to prevent this. In fact, an NIH study from 2022 puts the MMR that year at 32.6 deaths x 100,000 live births.[50] How can we say that women in the United States are secure if we are at such high risk for death as a consequence of childbirth? Furthermore, if women are not secure, and per the basic tenets of WPS the security of women is determinant of the security of the nation, how

can we say a country with such high levels of MMR and female insecurity is secure?

At a macro level, a high MMR can also be detrimental to a country's demographics. While it is clear that there are a great number of reasons why women may choose to or may choose not to bear children, having such a high MMR certainly is not helping alleviate women's childbirth fears. When women lose faith in their country's ability to protect them in the delivery room, they may make the conscious decision to have fewer or no children at all. This can have negative impacts on national demographics and contribute to a declining birth rate. Countries with declining birth rates are more vulnerable to economic decline and decreased military might, both of which affect the overall security of the nation.[51]

Failing to course-correct on women's healthcare will only lead to further preventable deaths of women who contribute to the health of our lives and society in tangible and intangible ways. A high MMR does not only represent a country's failure in the realm of healthcare; it is indicative of a larger system failure with regards to women's security. As a global leader, and a representative of democratic prosperity, the United States should strive to bring women's issues, such as MMR, to the forefront of public consciousness to begin to address the ways in which women are, still, not secure within American borders.

CONGRESS

To operationalize the Congressional Purple Forum and ensure its sustainability, we recommend the following actions:

1. Establish the Congressional Purple Forum as a semi-annual, rotating cross-committee convening.

The Congressional Purple Forum should be hosted twice a year by one of five standing committees: Agriculture, Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, or Science, Space, and Technology, to embed WPS-informed, cross-sectoral dialogue into congressional processes. This structure will strengthen bipartisan collaboration, break down silos across jurisdictions, and institutionalize WPS perspectives into the broader U.S. peace and security agenda.

2. Link each Forum session to the host committee's jurisdictional priorities while maintaining a consistent format.

Each session should tailor its focus to the hosting committee's issue area, such as disaster resilience, demographic readiness, homeland security, or technology governance, while retaining a core structure of working groups, panels, and policy brief development. This ensures relevance, sustains engagement, and integrates gender-informed analysis into a wide array of domestic and international security challenges.

3. Integrate civil society organizations, academics, and agency representatives as

strategic partners in the Forum.
The Purple Forum should formalize partnerships with key civil society groups, academics, and executive agency representatives, ensuring a sustained and diverse flow of expertise. This collaboration mirrors successful models like Canada's WPS Network[52] and the UK's APPG-WPS[53], where civil society inputs help inform legislative oversight and drive more effective, inclusive security policies.

4. Institutionalize an informal "Purple Forum Night" before each full session to build staff and member buy-in.

A short, informal pre-Forum event, co-hosted with the WPS Caucus, should introduce the Forum's relevance to congressional staff and members, using real-world examples and strategic data. This builds early buy-in, lowers barriers to entry, and demonstrates how WPS frameworks align with committee priorities without overburdening already stretched staffers.

5. Produce actionable policy briefs after each Forum to inform Congress and federal agencies.

Each Forum should conclude with a concise, actionable policy brief summarizing key takeaways, gaps in implementation, and concrete recommendations. These briefs ensure that the dialogue translates into tangible outputs that support congressional oversight, agency accountability, and long-term policy development aligned with WPS principles.

6. Encourage Appropriations Committee involvement to align funding priorities with Forum recommendations.

Given the central role of the Appropriations Committees in setting funding levels, the Forum should actively include appropriators and their staff in its sessions and outputs. Greater appropriations engagement will help ensure that WPS-informed strategies are reflected not just in rhetoric, but also in resource allocation, particularly for cross-cutting initiatives like civilian harm mitigation, disaster preparedness, and international development.

7. Frame the Purple Forum as a critical tool for enhancing U.S. resilience at home and credibility abroad.

By broadening the application of WPS beyond foreign assistance to include domestic disaster response, technology ethics, and democratic governance, the Forum helps reposition WPS as a practical, bipartisan tool for strengthening U.S. security and leadership. It signals that gender-informed perspectives are integral, not optional, to effective policymaking in the 21st century.

> *Congress has not yet conducted any formal hearings on the National WPS Strategy, agency implementation plans, or biennial WPS Reports to*

CONCLUSION

Throughout this report, we have laid out the case for Women and Peace and Security. Starting with its history, we tracked the growth of the movement that underpinned the first resolution UNSCR 1325, focused on the U.S. context, and proposed a series of recommendations to best move forward while plugging the holes that legal frameworks have left in their wake. Fundamentally, this document sought to answer the question: is WPS still a worthy investment going forward into these next 25 years?

It is the assertion of this report that WPS still has a place, not only in the global peace context, but in the American way of life. 25 years is not an extensive amount of time. WPS is still growing, shifting, evolving, and finding ways to fit itself into the governance systems and the lives of all who are affected by the marked lack of gendered lenses applied to everything from healthcare to instances of mass violence, to how we conduct war. In a constantly changing domestic and global context, WPS must find ways to evolve. It is up to policymakers and implementers of this framework to normalize Women and Peace and Security principles at every level of governance. This also means that WPS must be specific enough to institutional contexts, otherwise the framework is doomed to fail. Every institution, entity, and organization is receptive and antagonistic to different ways in which WPS could be framed. Without institutionalized mechanisms and sufficient resources, WPS risks being siloed, symbolic, or sidelined, rather than serving as the security asset it was designed to be. Implementers and policymakers must take it upon themselves to package WPS in the ways that are most agreeable to different institutional contexts, needs, and restraints.

These next 25 years could bring about the normalization of WPS in the American concept. As Karine Lepillez reminds us, *"gender should not be something that causes human suffering."*[54] As a legacy piece of the first Trump administration, WPS enjoys the benefits of bipartisan support, and has a real possibility to be a transformative framework through which the entire American populace can benefit. The foundation already exists. The mechanisms through which WPS can succeed are in place. It is not a matter of will and commitment to the principles of meaningful participation at every level of governance. Moving from symbolic commitment to strategic integration will be essential to building a more peaceful, equitable, and secure world.

Think Purple. Lead Differently.

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