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BRIDGING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA AND THE KOREAN PEACE PROCESS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE TASKS



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The twenty years of evolution of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda coincides with the twenty years of reconciliation process between South Korea (Republic of Korea; ROK) and North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea; DPRK). On 15 June 2000, the leaders of the ROK and the DPRK agreed to begin a reconciliation and cooperation process. This was the first ever summit between the two Koreas since the armistice agreement signed in 1953. Following its liberation from the 36 year-long Japanese colonialism in 1945, Korea became divided, and the two Koreas subsequently experienced the Korean War. Over three million lives, including civilians, were sacrificed during the three years of war between 1950 and 1953. Against this backdrop, the Korean reconciliation process did not progress well due to the many domestic and geopolitical factors which led to maintaining of the division.

The women's peace movement that emerged in South Korea mainly focused on dialogue with North Korean women groups and provision of humanitarian aid to the vulnerable population in North Korea. The movement addressed other issues as well, including disarmament and campaigns against militarism; peace and reunification education; and the peaceful resolution of the nuclear conflict between North Korea and the United States. The first inter-Korean women's dialogue took place in May 1991. The women leaders from the two Koreas met in Tokyo, Japan, for the first time since 1953. Subsequently, a women's delegation from the DPRK visited Seoul in November 1991 to attend a seminar titled "*Peace in Asia and Women's Role*". In September 1992, a women's delegation from ROK visited Pyongyang for the third seminar of the series. In doing so, they crossed the demilitarized zone (DMZ), marking the first case of a civilian-level visit to North Korea during the entire period of the division.

Women's Priorities in the Peace Movement: Towards Meaningful Participation

Given that the Korean War has not officially ended, the priorities of the women's movement have been in line with the national agenda, focusing on reconciliation and reunification, rather than other important issues including women's meaningful participation in the Korean peace process. Following the introduction of the WPS agenda to the women's peace groups in South Korea, however, it was recognized that gender equality and women's participation at all levels in the peace and reunification process was not secondary but just as important. Since then, women's participation in the Korean peace process became one of the top priority agendas.

The adoption of [the ROK's National Action Plan \(NAP\) to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\)](#) in 2014 was initiated through the advocacy of women's organisations, in close collaboration with female lawmakers. While working with the South Korean government towards the adoption of the NAP, women's peace groups also voiced demands to increase women's participation in the peace

and security area, especially in the Korean peace process, fully recognizing that there cannot be genuine and sustainable peace for women in the Korean Peninsula without women's meaningful participation in the peace process. However, women's participation at all levels of decision-making in the Korean peace process is not easy to realize, due to the character of the long-standing division of the Korean peninsula.

Though women's participation and activities have mainly been at the Track 1.5 or 2 levels, constant advocacy work was undertaken to bridge the WPS agenda and the Korean peace process. In 2008-2012, South Korean women's peace groups initiated the "*Northeast Asian Women's Peace Conference*" with female scholars and activists from China, Japan, Russia and the United States. The WPS agenda and the pillar on "participation" provided a necessary common ground for the participants. They all agreed that women must be represented at the negotiation table and play an active role for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Towards a Global Movement: Shifting to an Understanding of Women as Agents of Peace

From 2008 to 2017, inter-Korean relations halted, rendering it impossible to continue the dialogue between the South and North Korean women's groups. The historic *Women Cross DMZ* event took place in May 2015. This was an ice-breaking event in which 30 global women activists, including several Nobel Peace laureates, crossed the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ, from the North to the South, and brought high visibility for the importance of women's active role and meaningful participation for peace on the Korean Peninsula. The *Women Cross DMZ* event was critical in that women's participation in the Korean peace process became known to the global women's peace movement.



Thirty women peacemakers from around the world crossed the Korean Demilitarized Zone in May 2015. Photo: [Women Cross DMZ](#)

From 2019 to 2020, South Korean women peace activists played an active role in the global campaign *Korea Peace Now!*, and the ROK government began to recognize the importance of women's contributions in the 1.5 track diplomacy. This active contribution allowed for the fundamental shift in the perception of the government towards women in war and armed conflicts. The third generation of the ROK's 1325 NAP, announced in 2020, named women as peacebuilders for the Korean peace process. This was a significant step with the general perception having changed from viewing women mainly as victims of armed conflicts to women as agents for peace. This shift was especially important for two Koreas, as women were victims of gender-based violence and sexual slavery during World War II and were impacted the most during the long period of the division thereafter.

The Greatest Obstacles: The Ongoing Korean War and the Need for a Regional Dialogue on Women's Human Security

Despite these significant steps, many obstacles remain in expanding the WPS agenda in Northeast Asia. The greatest obstacle is the reality that the Korean War has not yet ended. The division of the Korean Peninsula and hostile relations between North Korea and the United States have provided countries in Northeast Asia with rationales to pursue a security-oriented peace, by maintaining military alliances, increasing military expenditures and paying less attention to human security, even under the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

"The COVID-19 pandemic had its effects as well. During the pandemic, the concept and value of care has become more important than ever, yet the majority of caregiving workers are women, and they were the first to be furloughed after the outbreak. Considering this situation, the WPS agenda should also embrace the concept of care, whilst redefining the concept and naming caregivers as agents for peace."

~ Kim Jeong-soo, Standing Representative, Women Making Peace, Republic of Korea

The United Nations and the international community should support women in Northeast Asia to end the Korean War and to further develop women's human security and the WPS agenda in the region. This can be done by continuing to promote dialogue between the women of Northeast Asia and enabling common efforts to go beyond the traditional national security discourse for building a sustainable peace in this region. In addition, the concept of peace and security differs among women in Northeast Asia depending on the priority agenda for gender equality in each country. It is, therefore, necessary for women in Northeast Asia to learn and understand the experiences of other women in the region and collaborate to develop a more comprehensive concept of women's human security based on the WPS agenda.

HOW WPS AND YPS INTERSECT: IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTHEAST ASIA



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This year marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), a landmark resolution of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Despite some limitations, the WPS agenda has been regarded as one of the most significant global frameworks which inject gender perspectives in the areas of peace and security. It has also been regarded as successful in having achieved from the civil society movement and in drawing attention from policymakers, practitioners, and academics worldwide.

This year also marks the 5th anniversary of the adoption of [the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 \(2015\) on Youth, Peace and Security \(YPS\)](#). This agenda calls for the inclusion of young people in peace

and security fields and recognition of the role of young people as agents of peace. Both agendas are often discussed together, mostly because they both emphasize the voices of the people who are easily excluded in peacebuilding, bringing inclusivity to the discussion table. This article will examine how WPS and YPS intersect, how they are interlinked and how they can learn from each other, with an aim to generate implications for Northeast Asia.

Inclusivity: how they resemble

Traditionally, the fields of peace and security have been largely dominated by men in power and based on a patriarchal structure. Power and privilege keep women and youth away from the decision-making tables or overlooked in programming and implementation.¹ In addition, women and youth are often perceived as victims of violence and conflict, rather than agents of change and peacebuilders. Increased participation of women and youth at all levels functions as an indication of strong governance and peaceful societies whereas, in contrast, exclusion of women, youth and other minority groups is understood as an indicator of insecurity and fragility of the society.²

"The WPS and YPS agendas emerged against this background of exclusion and underrepresentation, with a need for highlighting their roles for sustainable peace and promoting participation. Both agendas address root causes of conflicts such as exclusion and structural inequalities and challenge a narrow definition of peace that has been used as synonymous to the absence of conflict. This is in line with the UN's sustaining peace framework that highlights sustainable development and inclusive governance as attributes of peace."

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Intersectionality: how they are interlinked

WPS and YPS have a lot in common in their origin as well as their views on peace and security. They, however, also share similar concerns in the way how the issues are addressed: Women are often regarded as synonymous to gender and it has been a common practice to think of youth as one group. Similarly, women and youth (or even children sometimes) are very often categorised together. Looking at women and young people as a homogenous group(s) can create another exclusion of young 'women' in YPS or women who are 'young' in WPS. And this is where WPS and YPS directly intersect.

In this regard, both WPS and YPS communities have been emphasising an intersectional perspective that analyses different layers of exclusion resulting from one's multiple identities. Instead of homogenising each group, it would be crucial to understand their different needs, roles and opportunities. In fact, recognising youth in WPS has been raised and gender within YPS has been increasingly noted.³

Collectivity and creativity: how they can learn from each other

As such, WPS and YPS can overlap and create synergies together. In addition, they can also learn from each other. As the Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security notes, WPS modelling was an inspiration for YPS formulation.⁴ It also emphasised that youth organisations and youth leaders can seek lessons learned from the achievement of the global women's movement.⁵ It reflects strong networks and solidarity among women's groups and advocates, which have played a significant role in shaping the WPS agenda. National Action Plans (NAPs), a tool for more effective implementation of WPS at national and local levels, would be one of the examples. Adoption

¹ Berents, H. 2020. [Thinking Intergenerationally: WPS and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#), IPI Global Observatory,

² See more: Milante, G., Caparini, M., Bjertén Günther, E., and Jung, Y. 2017. Sustaining peace and sustainable development in dangerous places In *SIPRI Yearbook 2017*.

³ Berents, H. 2020. [Thinking Intergenerationally: WPS and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#), IPI Global Observatory,

⁴ Simpson, G. 2018. [The Missing Peace](#): Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security

⁵ Ibid.

of NAPs on WPS is often led by civil society actors in close collaboration with governments. As of September 2020, 86 UN Member States (or 45% of all Member States) have adopted NAPs⁶. A few countries with Finland as a pioneer have begun to adopt or draft NAPs on YPS.

On the other hand, gender experts and women advocate can also learn from youth activists and young people. Young people's innovative way of thinking and creative way of problem-solving has potential in responding to the challenges that the WPS agenda has faced.

Opportunity: implications for Northeast Asia region

Northeast Asia has not experienced active armed conflicts since the end of hostilities related to the Korean War (1950-1953), but geopolitical tensions remain in the region as reflected in the high level of militarisation.⁷ Within this background, the notion of peace and security in the region remains traditional and narrowly defined. National security is usually prioritised and there is also a notion that the region is peaceful (thus, that peacebuilding is not relevant in the region) because there is no armed conflict. In this regard, WPS and YPS agendas were not actively discussed in the region until recently. Moreover, Northeast Asian women and youth's participation and representation at the decision-making level remain generally lower than the global average (see Table 1).

Table 1. The proportion of women and youth in the national parliaments in Northeast Asia

| | China | Japan | ROK | DPRK | Mongolia | Global average |
|--|-------|-------|------|------|----------|----------------|
| % of women in parliament 2020 | 24.9 | 9.9 | 17.3 | 17.6 | 17.3 | 24.9 |
| % of youth (age under 30) in parliament 2018 (single and lower chambers) | 1.24 | 0 | 0 | - | 2.63 | 2.2 |
| % of youth (age under 40) in parliament 2018 (single and lower chambers) | 5.61 | 8.39 | 2.33 | - | 15.79 | 15.5 |

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Interparliamentary Union

However, there has been growing attention to the WPS agenda in the region. Various discussions at national, regional and international levels on policy and implementations have been ongoing, with active civil society movements and increased political will. As shown in different initiatives, such as the DPPA-convened YPS regional workshop held in Ulaanbaatar in June 2019, and youth-led regional dialogues on disarmament and non-proliferation, there is also increasing recognition of the YPS agenda in the region.

As latecomers in the agendas, there are opportunities to advance the WPS and YPS agendas in Northeast Asia. First, women and youth movements could be an opportunity to change the notion of peace and security in this highly militarized region. And especially young women-led activities that are in line with the WPS and YPS framework will more likely be able to influence the next generation and shaping

the peace discourse in the region in a way that inclusive governance, sustainable development and sustaining peace are increasingly highlighted.

Second, with the region's active civil society, regional networks that discuss WPS and YPS can play a crucial role for peacebuilding when high-level political relations are unfavourable for positive movement. As shown in the global women's movement's role for WPS, collectivity and solidarity can be an important factor for the advancement of policy and implementation.

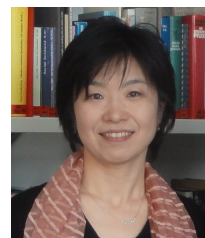
Third, a number of new initiatives in the region based on innovation and creativity can potentially bring a change in lives of women and young people. This is often led by youth, and established actors in WPS could benefit from the lessons learned of initiatives. For example, in Mongolia which includes a high proportion of the young population, strengthening women and youth engagement has gained broad attention. Economic empowerment of women and youth has been particularly emphasised with various ways including entrepreneurship led by youth. This would serve as a foundation for greater participation of women and youth in the political, economic and social spheres and also at the decision-making level.

Today we see more engagement of women and youth in peace and security than before. However, progress in the WPS and YPS policy and implementation to date has been insufficient. The agendas still often remain excluded from broader discussions of building durable and sustainable peace. The Northeast Asia region is not an exception. Yet, we also see areas where these agendas are essential, especially in light of new emerging security challenges such as climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this background, changes in understanding peace would be crucial and the WPS and YPS agendas appear more important than ever, in the Northeast Asia region and also globally.

TOWARD GENUINE SECURITY: REIMAGINING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA FROM JAPAN



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The year of 2020 marked significant anniversaries for the civil society, the United Nations and other partners worldwide working to implement the WPS Agenda. It was also an important milestone in Northeast Asia, as the women's peace movement commemorated in December 2020 the twenty years since [the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal](#) on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery was held in Tokyo. A landmark initiative led by regional women's groups, and

⁶ WILPF [data](#) on WPS national-level implementation

⁷ According to SIPRI Military Expenditure database, China (2nd), Japan (9th) and ROK (10th) are ranked as top 10 largest military spenders in 2019. Tian, N. *et al.* 2020. *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019*. SIPRI Fact Sheet.

with the survivors' voices at the forefront, the civil society organized tribunal brought the attention of the international community to this issue.

Throughout 2020, various events at national, regional and global levels have been held to reflect upon and celebrate the gains of these twenty years. While strides made must be acknowledged, we must also recognize the reality that progress on many key issues is stagnant and action insufficient. This article examines the situation of the WPS Agenda in Japan, including the drafting process and substance of the country's [NAP on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325](#); the relevance of "domestic" issues often neglected from the WPS Agenda of "non-conflict" donor countries, and the need for a creative, regional

Filling the gaps: The NAP drafting process in Japan

Following the creation of the international normative framework of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda, Japan launched a process in 2013 to create its own NAP. It was adopted in September 2015, the second in Northeast Asia. The creation of this plan is considered a positive, which would not have occurred without the global mechanism and momentum provided by the Agenda. Yet, various issues with the NAP process demonstrate that not as much has changed in twenty years as might have been hoped.

Demands by civil society to create mechanisms for their participation were initially met at the outset of the drafting process led by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A series of consultation with civil society organizations, informal "small group" meetings to deliberate the drafts, and hearings in several locations were held throughout 2013 and 2014. Through this process, it was made clear that for civil society and feminist researchers working on the WPS Agenda, the issues of the former "comfort women" or military sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army, and the impact of the military presence in Okinawa on women's security, were important agenda items which must not be excluded.

Particularly, at a hearing held in Okinawa, local women representatives emphasized how the ongoing impact of the past century wars still pervade the life of women, and that violence against women by military personnel remains a regular occurrence. The fact that space was provided for such input to be made was welcomed. At the same time, however, relevant civil society recommendations on the NAP substance were largely disregarded. Despite the appeal of local women that Okinawa is a key stakeholder in WPS, the final NAP did not contain any reference to the prefecture or to issues relating to the stationing of foreign military. Earlier drafts also included some language referring to past war responsibilities.

approach moving forward.

Past injustice as a root cause of present insecurity

These issues are often interpreted from the lens of past or historical conflict. Yet, they continue to directly impact the peace and security situation in Northeast Asia today, ergo women's peace and security. Tensions between nations are connected to the legacies of colonialism, and issues including that of the "comfort women" are often politicized. A failure to recognize colonial responsibility and to redress past wrongs must be considered as a risk to the current and future stability and security of the region, which cannot be guaranteed without rebuilding of relationships.

The Government of Japan is a strong supporter of UN Women and of various initiatives abroad for gender equality, including being a significant donor to the Office of the Special Representative of the UN

Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. At the same time, recommendations from both civil society and from various UN instruments to address the unresolved issues of wartime violence against women in the twentieth century remain neglected. This paradox poses a potential negative impact on the global situation, risking the creation of a precedent of exclusion of women survivors from post-conflict processes.

Toward genuine security: Looking at WPS from a regional lens

A key factor in this paradox is the way that the WPS Agenda is considered as disconnected from "domestic" issues. As a "non-conflict" donor country, Japan's approach to the Agenda is largely focused on provision of official development aid, without attention to WPS issues closer to home. This disconnect was symbolically seen in the fact that at the same time as the first NAP was being developed, Japan was experiencing a period of critical debate over controversial new security legislation. A group of over 100 women filed a lawsuit against the government, claiming that the legislation passed in 2016 was unconstitutional and in violation of women's rights. Failure to listen to or reflect women's voices in security issues demonstrates the same fundamental structural issues regarding women's participation, and a failure to fully consider genuine security.

"The ongoing legacies of past wars, and associated contemporary security threats, show that "conflict" should be considered in a broader sense. The need to prevent and eliminate sexual violence in conflict zones is urgent and undeniable. Yet, "non-conflict" regions should be encouraged to consider UNSCR 1325 and relevant NAPs not only within the development aid framework, but also in relation to women's security within their own region."

- Akibayashi Kozue, Watanabe Mina, and Meri Joyce

While Okinawa may not be directly participating in any armed conflict, the long-term stationing of foreign military has a direct impact on local security. Japan and its neighbors are not at war, yet the legacies of past conflict and colonial rule pose a risk for future conflict. Women's peace and security, therefore, is still affected in regions deemed as non-conflict, and such domestic or historical concerns should therefore also be addressed within the WPS Agenda.

Such threats to security also require an approach beyond any one single state. A cooperative regional approach which could reflect the complex relations between states, consider the root causes of conflicts, and build upon transnational collaboration between women's and civil society movements, is one potential creative approach to reimagining WPS within non-conflict contexts in Northeast Asia, and seeking ways to build sustained peace and genuine security for all.

Chinese Perspectives and Practice in Promoting Women's Role in World Peace and Security



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^{*} Dr. Liu published "WPS as Diplomatic Vocation: The Case of China" in S.E. Davies and J. True (Eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security* in 2018, under which the author updated this article. The author would like to extend her great

gratitude to her research assistant He Zhuangyi who has made great contributions to this article.

Peace is only sustainable if women are fully involved in all stages of the process.

The year of 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the 25th Anniversary of the World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The Secretary-General António Guterres, when participating at a virtual roundtable discussion on WPS in peacekeeping, stressed that “women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in UN peacekeeping is such a priority and we all must adopt feminist approaches to accelerate it”⁹.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has emphasized the importance of gender equality on various occasions and expressed its consistent support for the global WPS agenda. At the High-level Meeting on the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, President Xi Jinping put forward an important initiative of convening another Global Leaders’ Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in 2025, announced \$10 million funding to UN Women in the next five years, and the pledge to continue funding the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education¹⁰. It is evident that China is ready to keep advancing the WPS agenda as it has been making great efforts in the past decades.

China’s Perspectives toward WPS

China understands the important role of women in the society and the process of civilization and has actively upheld the UN principle on gender equality. Thus, when the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was planning a World Conference on Women in 1995, Mr. Qian Qichen, China’s then Foreign Minister, proposed to hold the conference in Beijing. The Conference marked an important turning point for gender equality and laid the foundation for the WPS agenda. Besides, China voted in favor of all Security Council resolutions on WPS and expressed an affirmative position in all public debates on WPS.¹¹ To better understand the perspectives of China, the author analysed official statements as follows:

First, China strongly supports the “participation” pillar of WPS, suggesting that the international community should not only advocate for women’s inclusion in peace and security deliberations, but also tackle the root causes of conflict itself to promote women’s peace and security. China has never regarded crimes against women and girls in conflict situations, and their lack of participation in economic, political, and social life, as independent WPS issues. Instead, China promotes the incorporation of these ideas into the broader UN mandate, specifically the peace and development frameworks. China maintains the “the issue of women is that of development”¹² and that conflicts, poverty and lack of development in concerned regions are the root causes of the crimes and discrimination against women and girls. China attaches great significance to women’s issues in its National Action Plan of Human Rights and the National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, China stresses that incorporating WPS into the local context is the primary responsibility of the affected nations. China’s representatives repeatedly emphasized the essential role of states in the protection and empowerment of women. During the 2007 Open Debate on WPS, China called on the countries concerned to “formulate, on the basis of their specific circumstances, national plans of action or strategies to implement resolution 1325”¹³. China presents the role of the international community as primarily concerned with delivering the relief and recovery pillar, including providing assistance to the countries concerned. China suggests that the international

community should assist with the creation of gender balanced, stable leadership in these countries, while respecting their sovereignty.

Third, China also values the UN’s role in implementing the prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery functions of WPS. While the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and for the removal of the direct causes of conflicts via prevention initiatives, China has never regarded it as the sole authoritative UN organ with respect to the implementation of WPS. China believes that “the various UN organs must follow their own mandates and respect the division of labor, making every attempt to avoid any overlap of efforts”¹⁴. For example, the Security Council should “focus on conflict prevention, dispute mediation and post-conflict reconstruction” instead of “establishing universal standards with regard to women’s issues and human rights”^{15,16}. ECOSOC can provide humanitarian assistance to the conflict-affected countries; and the Human Rights Council can focus on the situation of human rights, especially that of women, in those countries. China also realizes the importance of regional, subregional and nongovernmental organizations in implementing WPS. In this regard, “we should take seriously and give full play to the unique strength of regional and sub-regional organizations such as the African Union and the League of Arab States, and encourage regional initiatives and practices based on the actual conditions of the regions.”¹⁷

“It is evident that China considers WPS to be an important global agenda that concerns the future of development and civilization. China is determined to make this agenda a reality through the cooperation and coordination of the international community and nation states. In addition, China values the role of UN agencies, but requires the international community to respect the leadership role and sovereignty of states when implementing WPS. Moreover, it regards the maintenance of peace and development as the fundamental solution to the participation of women, and hopes that the international community can find peaceful ways to resolve these issues for sustainable and balanced development.”

*~ Dr. Liu Tiewa, Associate Professor
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China’s Practice to Implement WPS Agenda

China has been actively promoting global cooperation in women’s development, implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, relevant UN Security Council resolutions through concrete actions. When helping to implement WPS on the international level, China mainly chooses diplomatic or political solutions, offering financial support to related agencies within the UN framework and training courses to female officials from conflict-affected countries.

China tries to implement WPS through UN frameworks, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected countries. China deployed women peacekeepers to UN peace missions that report high rates of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2014, China dispatched an infantry battalion with a squad of thirteen infantry women to the peacekeeping operation in South Sudan. This was the first time that China had sent out female peacekeepers. In 2016, China held, for the first time, an international training course specifically for

⁹ [UN News](#): Guterres: UN working ‘relentlessly’ to advance women, peace and security agenda, October 2020;

¹⁰ [Remarks](#) by Ambassador Zhang Jun at Security Council VTC on Women, Peace and Security, October 2020;

¹¹ Up to date there have been ten resolutions of WPS adopted: S/RES/1325 (2000), S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1889 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010), S/RES/2106 (2013), S/RES/2122 (2013), S/RES/2242 (2015), S/RES/2467 (2019), S/RES/2493 (2019).

¹² UNSC, S/PV. 6722, Feb. 23rd, 2012, p. 24.

¹³ UNSC, S/PV. 5766, Oct. 23rd, 2007, p. 19.

¹⁴ UNSC, S/PV. 7044, Oct. 18th, 2013, p. 20.

¹⁵ UNSC, S/PV. 7044, Oct. 18th, 2013, p. 20.

¹⁶ UNSC, S/PV. 6877, Nov. 30th, 2012, p. 24.

¹⁷ [Remarks](#) by Ambassador Zhang Jun at Security Council VTC on Women, Peace and Security, October 2020.

women peacekeepers¹⁸. The course was co-organized by the Office of Peacekeeping Affairs of Ministry of National Defense, the Peacekeeping Center of the Ministry of National Defense, and UN Women, in order to encourage troop-contributing countries to actively send women peacekeeping officers and improve their operational capacities.



Photo: China Daily

China pays great attention to the equal participation of women in the social and political aspects of their daily life. First, gender equality was promoted through law regulations and policy supports. In 2011, the State Council issued the “Framework of Chinese Women Development” (2011–2020), which aims to protect women’s interests, improve their social status, and enhance their equal participation in economic and social development¹⁹. Although China has not yet developed a National NAP specifically for the WPS agenda, it incorporated the protection of women from violence and discrimination, and the promotion of women’s rights and participation into daily life through different laws and regulations. China is implementing its third NAP for Human Rights (2016–2020) and produced two assessment reports on the NAP’s implementation (2009–2010 and 2012–2015), all of which included a section on the protection of women’s rights.²⁰

Second, women in China gained higher social status now and participated more than ever in both economic and political areas. In recent years, the number of female members and party representatives of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was on the rise: CPC’s female members in 2019 equaled to 25.599 million, accounting for 27.9% of the total membership, nearly twice higher than in 2015. Increased participation of women is also evident at local and municipal levels. For example, over the past decade, the proportion of women in neighborhood committees has been on the rise, reaching 24% in 2018, and 11.1% of the directors of village committees were women, which accomplished the goal in the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011–2020).²¹

In the past five years, China has made great progress in the field of women and development, though it also faces unprecedented challenges. The “Beijing +25” report submitted to the UN mentioned “vigorously improving the capacity of maternal and child health services and continuously improving the health of women should be listed as one of the five priority areas for the future goal of China’s development”.²² In addition, the key priorities proposed by an ESCAP

report are as followed: eliminating violence against women and girls, women’s political participation and leadership, economic empowerment of women, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, equality and non-discrimination under the law,²³ which echoed well with the core concerns in the new era of sustainable development.

In total, the perspectives and practices of Chinese people towards women, peace and security are more comprehensive and flexible on the international and domestic stage. Globally, China engages in the issue of WPS more attentively and deeply than the past ten years since the establishment of China’s perspectives of global governance and active participation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Domestically, since President Xi Jinping’s address at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee on women’s development, China increased female participation at each level, especially emphasizing corresponding laws and the significance of social education on gender equality. In practice, China would like to translate the sustainable and balanced development into better participation and protection of women in realizing peace and security through international cooperation.

Beyond Just the Men in Suits

Reflections from DPPA-organized regional workshop on Youth, Peace and Security, 3-4 June 2019, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



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Disarmament, Mongolia

In June 2019, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, the UN Country Team in Mongolia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) brought together young people from all around Northeast Asia to discuss the youth, peace and security agenda and perspectives for dialogues in the region.

“It should not be something extraordinary, but we have become accustomed to seeing men in suits as experts on various panels. From the beginning, this event challenged my stereotypes and made a strong statement through its choice of speakers and participants from all over the region and beyond. The importance of including young people in discussions of issues of peace and security – and even in peace negotiations – has been always a distant objective, but it became evident it was now beyond question.”

*~ Khishigjargal Enkhbayar,
Member, DPPA-ODA Steering Committee of Youth Leaders from
Northeast Asia on Youth and Disarmament, Mongolia*

Excitement over the number of young and diverse people and pleasant surprise that they were active participants. Those were sentiments I

¹⁸ China News, “China held an international training course for women peacekeepers for the first time”, June 27th, 2016, see <http://www.chinanews.com/m/mil/2016/06-27/7918577.shtml>, last retrieved on September 28th, 2016.

¹⁹ Full text of “The Framework of Chinese Women Development (2011–2020),” August 8, 2011, see, http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2011-08/08/content_23160230_2.htm.

²⁰ Human Rights, China, <http://www.humanrights.cn/html/wxzl/3/>.

²¹ Liu Bohong, Fan Sixian, ‘Women’s participation in promoting scientific and democratic decision-making and social governance’[Funv Canzheng Zhutui Kexueminzhu Juece he Shehui Zhili], Journal of Shandong Women’s University [Sandong Nvzi Xueyuan Xuebao](June, 2020), P.17.

²² Cai Yiping, ‘Women and Health’[Funv yu Jiankang], Journal of Shandong Women’s University[Sandong Nvzi Xueyuan Xuebao] (July 2020), P. 32.

²³ UNESCAP: “Pacific: An Analysis of the Beijing+25 Review Reports”, P. 30.

heard from many participants at the regional workshop on Youth, Peace and Security: Perspectives for Dialogues in Northeast Asia, held in Ulaanbaatar in 2019.

Diversity was yet another constructive factor in the workshop: young people hailed from all corners of Asia and the West. We had young diplomats, youth activists, scholars, students, civil society workers, an Instagram celebrity and even a podcast enthusiast. I was impressed by the number of young influential leaders and experts in the field, including Samuel Goda, the Special Representative of [the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office on Youth and Security](#), Lumi Young, Coordinator at [Alliansi](#), National Youth Council of Finland, which became the first country in the world to adopt the National Action Plan to implement the historic [UN Security Council Resolution 2250](#), and Mridul Upadhyay of [UNOY Peacebuilders](#), who passionately talked about how the Resolution can be implemented in different parts of the world.

With stimulating discussions on traditional and non-traditional challenges to security, youth leadership and networks in prevention and peacebuilding, and challenges in advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, this two-day event challenged and empowered youth to have open dialogues about issues that we are not too comfortable discussing. The panel on identity, for example, was one of much debate and discussion. What does it mean to be Northeast Asian? Can or should these countries have a shared identity? From food to films, the participants sought ways to connect the countries under a shared identity. Despite quite advanced economic cooperation, the persistence of historic grievances in the region was frequently brought up as a challenge needing to be discussed in order to move forward. As one expert said, “Dealing with the past is important to build and sustain peace in any region. Opening wounds may be painful, but it is needed to heal”. These words resonated with many in the room.



Members of the all female special panel on Youth, Peace and Security at the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, June 2019. UN Photo.

As a young Mongolian, vaguely familiar with the history of my neighboring countries, I appreciated the honesty and sincerity of the speakers, who shared their emotional experiences of struggle and identity. These stories expanded my worldview and brought nuance to the topic of identity in peace and security. They also showed me that youth is best placed to unpack uncomfortable topics, drawing on shared culture and history, as well as innovation. I was left speechless when a participant from Seoul shared her vision of a united Korea

through the smart use of available technology. Based on her experiences she provided an example of overcoming one of the toughest borders in modern history with the help of something as simple as radio.

It was both inspiring and empowering when Mongolia's then Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar Damdin personally welcomed our youth participants at the Sixth Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, an annual regional dialogue platform, which took place back-to-back to the regional YPS workshop. It was a reminder that young people have the full right to be at the table to take part in the discussions on peace and security issues. And we showcased that by leading a special session on Youth, Peace and Security with an all-female panel.

The two-day workshop, the first of its kind in Northeast Asia, was an important event that brought people and ideas together from all over the world to foster understanding and form the basis of future dialogue and networks in the region. It reaffirmed commitments from the government and the international community as well as from young people to work together for peace and security. For me, the workshop provided an opportunity to share my culture with new friends, expanded my views on my neighbors, and provided concrete tools to utilize in my future work. It provided us with more questions than answers, but it is these questions that will propel all 1.8 billion of us forward to explore, discover, and shape lasting peace.

Links and resources

- [DPPA Women Peace and Security Policy](#), New York 2019.
- DPPA: [Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies](#), New York 2017.
- DPPA: [Guidance for Mediators](#), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements. New York 2012.

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