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The Role of Human Security in Addressing the Inclusion of Women: Nuclear Security and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Jordan and Egypt

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Abstract

This paper argues for a human security approach to women's participation in nuclear security that stems from the larger Women, Peace and Security framework. This approach incorporates a gender perspective and a feminist lens that argues that women's participation should extend beyond the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to include an understanding of the centrality of women's role from a human security approach in peacebuilding participation, negotiation, and conflict prevention. The paper explores this nexus by reviewing Egypt and Jordan's approach to Women, Peace and Security and argues for framing women's inclusion within a human security perspective. The review revealed a need to shift the discourse beyond enhancing women's roles in disarmament efforts, conflict prevention, and post-conflict peacebuilding toward addressing broader peace and sustainability issues. The paper also advocates adopting a feminist viewpoint that recognizes women's varied contributions to security within complex societal and geopolitical landscapes.

Keywords: nuclear security; Women, Peace and Security Agenda; gender perspectives; human security; diversity, equity, and inclusion; peacebuilding; conflict resolution

1. Introduction

Nuclear security policies and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda are distinct yet interrelated policies that seek to enhance peace, security, and protection

against terrorism. The paper conceptually brings together these policies to argue for a comprehensive approach to women's participation in nuclear security that stems from the larger WPS framework, which incorporates a gender and human security perspective that prioritizes peace, harmony, and human dignity.

Nuclear security, as a general concept, is concerned with the "prevention of, detection of, and response to, criminal or intentional unauthorized acts involving or directed at nuclear material, other radioactive material, associated facilities, or associated activities" [1]. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of and interest in enhancing the representation and contributions of women in the nuclear security field—efforts that are largely framed in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks. This framing is based on the premise that different perspectives, including those of traditionally minority and marginalized communities, such as those in the nuclear sector, can strengthen policy and decision-making efforts aimed at disarmament, nonproliferation, and conflict resolution [2–3].

The WPS Agenda aims to acknowledge and increase women's full and impactful participation in peacemaking negotiations and peacebuilding efforts. The WPS Agenda became part of the Security Council's agenda by adopting the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Since then, 10 WPS resolutions have been adopted that address the role of women in peace negotiations, sexual violence and gendered dynamics in conflict, postconflict reconstruction, and women's participation in countering and preventing violent extremism [4–5].

The WPS Agenda in support of UNSCR 1325 rests on four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. The first pillar—participation—reflects the need to increase women's inclusion in peace negotiations, peacekeeping forces, and at all levels of decision-making. The protection pillar focuses on protecting women from the gendered impact of war, violence, and displacement, including sexual violence. The prevention pillar addresses the lived realities of women in conflict and calls for the prevention of all types of violence, including instrumenting sexual violence as a war tactic, and the relief and recovery pillar calls for the advancement of relief and recovery measures through a gendered lens in resettlement, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration [6–7]. Collectively, these pillars highlight the gendered impact of conflict, call for the protection of women, and promote women's roles in peacemaking and peacebuilding settings.

Some recognize the need for nuclear security to be linked to international efforts on gender and security, including the WPS Agenda [8]. However, with few exceptions, the relationship between the role of women in nuclear security and the WPS Agenda remains relatively underexplored in the relevant literature. In exploring the nexus between nuclear security and the WPS Agenda, we will look at the human security approach, its centrality to the WPS Agenda, and the inclusion of women in security. We will then examine the implementation of the WPS framework in Egypt and Jordan to understand the conceptualization of the WPS Agenda and frame women's participation and inclusion from a human security lens. Ultimately, this paper seeks to enact a shift in

our thinking and to go beyond promoting the role and contributions of women in nuclear security and to consider questions of peace and sustainability that take an expansive look at the different roles of women in security and nuclear security as part of the broader dynamic of societies and geopolitical influences.

In the following sections, we will address how DEI is being operationalized in the security domain and then argue why the inclusion of women in nuclear security is aligned with the larger WPS Agenda. We will highlight how the WPS Agenda should incorporate a human security approach that centers on human dignity and an integrated concept of security. The human security approach aligns with the gender and feminist lens that emphasizes the importance of framing the WPS Agenda as a “rights-based” agenda. [9]. We will highlight Egypt and Jordan’s implementation of the WPS to draw conclusions on how women’s roles in security are conceptualized and advance the argument that the role of women in the security domain in general and nuclear security in particular needs to consider issues of justice, equality, and the understanding of the centrality of women in disarmament, peacebuilding, and peacemaking.

a. DEI and Gender in the Security Domain

There is an increasingly common trope that pursuing gender equality is not just the *right* thing to do but that it is also the *smart* thing to do. Recent years have witnessed considerable growth in the attention, effort, and resources dedicated to enhancing DEI across a wide range of sectors, including nuclear. This section does not intend to provide an exhaustive overview of DEI frameworks, specifically in the context of nuclear security.¹ For the purposes of the arguments set forth herein, it is important to note that the development of DEI stems from the evolution and reconceptualization of affirmative action. Affirmative action first rose to prominence in the Civil Rights period in the United States, enshrined in President John F. Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925 and the subsequent passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 under President Lyndon B. Johnson [10].

In large part, affirmative action has been replaced by DEI concepts and frameworks into an organization’s culture and policies [10], which go beyond the focus of affirmative action by focusing on integrating diversity, meaning who is being represented in the workforce; equity, which strives for equal results for all members of a workforce, taking into consideration a person’s unique circumstances; and inclusion, which is the extent to which members of a workforce are enabled to make meaningful contributions [11]. In the context of this paper, it is critical for our recognition that not only do current resources on DEI primarily focus on Western values and cultural contexts, but they can also be perceived as an issue exclusive to Western states [12].

¹ DEI frameworks in nuclear security have been notably covered in previous publications in this journal. For example, Nair, S.; McAllister, C.; Pluff, A.; Mack, K. C. Gender Undone: Confronting Bias in the Nuclear Field. *Int. J. Nucl. Secur.* 2023, 8 (2). <https://doi.org/10.7290/ijns202270>; Alkış, M. A.; Sinovets, P. Nuclear Security: Making Gender Equality a Working Reality. *Int. J. Nucl. Secur.* 2023, 8 (2). <https://doi.org/10.7290/ijns220431>

DEI policies, most often associated with the realms of corporations and educational institutions, are increasingly adopted within the traditionally male-dominated sphere of international security. This area encompasses arms control, nonproliferation, disarmament, and nuclear security. In the context of international security, the focus is primarily on increasing the participation of women in the workforce in these fields and, where appropriate, their representation as members and leaders of delegations in various international fora. Despite the substantial progress that has been made in recent years in disarmament diplomacy, however, women are still underrepresented, and there are fewer women proportional to men in higher-level positions [13].

In the context of nuclear security, several organizations, programs, and initiatives are dedicated to closing the gap and advancing gender parity in nuclear security. They include the World Institute for Nuclear Security, Gender Champions in Nuclear Security, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), among others.² Promoting women's participation and inclusion in nuclear security not only enhances an organization's nuclear security culture but has also been reported as a potential measure to mitigate against insider threats [12]. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that women comprise even less than the 20% estimate of women in nuclear more broadly, despite the lack of specific figures [14].

The other area in the security domain in which the role of gender has received significant attention is dealing with the gendered impact of conflict on women and its normative framework, enshrined in the collective WPS Agenda. The next subsections will introduce the concept of human security and the WPS Agenda and demonstrate how the Agenda's objectives align with those of DEI in nuclear security.

b. Human Security

The concept of human security shifts the focus of security analysis from states or nations to the individual. Human security encompasses protection from physical violence and the security of individuals and communities, encapsulated by the seven pillars identified in the 1994 United Nations (UN) Development Report: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, political, and community security. The notion of human security is fundamentally about safeguarding individuals against threats affecting their well-being and comfort [15–16].

The prominence of human security rose in the mid-1990s, only to wane afterward. Nevertheless, it has reemerged as a conceptual and operational framework that offers long-term solutions to societal challenges. The human security approach advocates for a perspective that sees short-term and isolated efforts to build resilience or prevent violent extremism as inherently flawed. Without being part of a cohesive and sustained vision for human security, such initiatives will likely be limited in effectiveness. Thus, human security is not just about immediate responses but also about embedding these

² The WINS report on *Gender and Nuclear Security: Challenges and Opportunities* [14] provides an overview of the different organizations and initiatives concerned with advancing gender in nuclear security.

responses within a larger, more strategic framework that prioritizes individuals' enduring safety and well-being at its core [16].

The 2013 *Report of the Secretary-General, Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 66/290 on human security (A/68/685)*, embodies a comprehensive human security analysis from an implementation perspective, drawing from extensive data collected from member states, regional entities, UN agencies, academia, and nongovernmental organizations. The report highlights the effectiveness of the human security approach in mitigating conflict risks, breaking down barriers to sustainable development, and fostering a life of dignity for all. It reports on key takeaways emphasizing the necessity for inclusive, people-centric solutions adapted to the multifaceted nature of local vulnerabilities [17].

The report also offers a recent understanding of human security that includes the recognition of the interconnectedness of peace, development, and human rights and affirming that governments' primary responsibility is to ensure their citizens' well-being. In conclusion, the overarching goal is to embed human security as a central tenet in global efforts to ensure peace, progress, and prosperity away from poverty, fear, and want for people [17].

The connection between human security on the one hand and inclusive participation of women in sustainable peace and security efforts on the other directly situates the human security approach within the WPS Agenda.

c. WPS Agenda and Women in the Nuclear Sector

On October 31, 2000, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on WPS. Resolution 1325 linked women to the peace and security agenda by looking at women's contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace [5]. However, the history of the WPS Agenda is the product of a long global movement for peace that started after the widespread devastation of World War I and evolved from small-scale organizing on local and national levels [18]. Throughout World War II, women's groups worldwide demanded an end to the conflict and international disarmament: "Peace as an end in itself was the center of their agenda" [19].

The resolutions comprising the WPS Agenda can be divided into two categories. The first, spearheaded by Resolution 1325, concerns the effective participation of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding. The second category addresses conflict-related sexual violence [5]. The WPS Agenda has been operationalized by UN member states through National Action Plans (NAPs) to outline their commitment to women's equal and meaningful participation; a gender lens in peace and security institutions, policies, activities, strategies, and initiatives; and set their strategic goals for implementing the WPS Agenda.

Given the centrality and relevance of the WPS Agenda in international efforts for positive peace, UN Security Council representatives proposed bridging the gap between WPS and UNSCR 1540 [20]. The 1540 Resolution "obliges States to refrain from

supporting by any means non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring, or using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery” [21]. The Norwegian ambassador to the UN in New York argued in 2022 that applying the WPS lens is useful to understand the gender roles in the engagement, use, and impact of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons [20]. Moreover, the ambassador noted that the “full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at decision-making is central to harnessing diverse expertise” and that there is a clear lack of gender diversity in 1540-related processes.

Nuclear weapons and nuclear energy have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, as well as influence on national security and emergency response through nuclear security sector policies. However, only two countries, Ireland and the Philippines, use the word “nuclear” in their NAPs to address the harms of nuclear weapons on women through a security lens [22]. This omission of nuclear disarmament and the nuclear sector in the NAPs projects a devaluation of disarmament and the role of women in the nuclear sector [23]. Moreover, analysts have expressed concerns that the WPS resolutions and, by extension, national NAPs still perpetuate “restrictive assumptions about where and how women can contribute” to peacebuilding projects [23].

The WPS Agenda’s main strategies address gender balancing and gender mainstreaming in critical security sectors, with targeted efforts to increase women’s participation at decision-making levels. Gender mainstreaming involves applying a gender equality perspective in programs, policies, and processes, and gender balancing aims to ensure equal representation of women and men in all areas. Therefore, current DEI efforts to encourage women to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), engage in STEM careers, and promote women’s participation in the nuclear sector must also align with the larger WPS Agenda that not only aims to increase the proportion of women but also to apply a gender lens to retain women and examine how policies affect gender differently. Women’s participation in security, a core objective of Resolution 1325, is no longer optional but has the consequence of changing the politics of peace and the politics of security [24].

In the next section, we elaborate on why framing WPS from a human security perspective informs our understanding and implementation of the WPS Agenda, which recognizes the inclusion of women in arms control, nonproliferation, disarmament, and nuclear security.

2. Applying a Human Security Approach to the WPS Agenda

To effectively approach the WPS Agenda, it is vital to include a human security perspective that ensures women’s active and significant engagement in peace and security roles. The human security perspective confronts the gender-based consequences of military frameworks and addresses the drivers of violent extremism and conflict rather than merely focusing on the protection of women in wartime. It also recognizes the integration of women as not only the right or smart thing to do but also the cornerstone of peace and human development.

This understanding of human security demonstrates that the WPS Agenda and its subsequent implementation through a NAP that aims to commit to “peace as an end in itself” [19], security, and ensuring the role of all people to live in dignity would be strengthened through their inclusion of a human security approach. A human security approach might address some of the critiques of the implementation of the WPS Agenda in the Middle East, which focus on state-centric security policies and not enough on a sustainable peace- and society-centered approach to security [25]. Implementing the WPS Agenda with a human security approach acknowledges the fact that the role of women in the security sector, including the nuclear security sector, does not follow the “add women and stir” approach. Rather, it accentuates the diverse voices, roles, and perspectives that women can play in all efforts and activities related to nuclear security. These include roles in scientific research, regulations and policy-making, security operations, and emergency response. From a human security perspective, the WPS Agenda stresses that women’s role in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament is the key to effective and lasting peacemaking that centers human safety and security through gender balancing and gender mainstreaming strategies.

A human security approach is thus essential to implementing the WPS Agenda. It emphasizes the diverse and unique contributions of women in all their different roles and capacities, taking into consideration their unique needs and contributions to develop a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach to ensure sustainable peace.

The next section will provide an overview of WPS frameworks in the Middle East. We will then explore WPS implementation in Egypt and Jordan as case studies to understand how women’s roles and contributions are conceptualized.

3. WPS Localization in the Middle East

The most concrete measure for implementing UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions is developing and implementing NAPs. Although NAPs should not be viewed as the sole factor to gauge a country’s commitment to the WPS Agenda, it is nevertheless a core element that allows for assessment of the extent of this commitment and cross-country comparison. NAPs are strategy documents at the national level that detail how a country’s government will pursue and put into action the required objectives, measures, and policies for the actualization and implementation of the four pillars of the WPS Agenda. Since the first NAP in 2005, 107 countries have developed their NAPs, with many developing subsequent iterations and versions of their plans [26].

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, seven countries have developed their NAPs, in addition to Palestine, and a Regional Action Plan by the League of Arab States (LAS) [26]. Regional countries have taken different approaches to conceptualizing and implementing the WPS Agenda and have generally made notable, if uneven and sometimes piecemeal, progress toward adopting the agenda’s objectives. A recent report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the implementation of WPS across the Arab region stated that among the

four pillars of the WPS Agenda, participation and protection have been the dominant themes in the region. Although participation has focused on broader approaches to eliminating discrimination against women across frameworks in the legislative and policy spheres, protection has also been especially pronounced in countries experiencing either armed conflict or extended crises [27].

The following sections will explore the approach to and extent of implementation in two MENA countries: Egypt and Jordan. The countries are not currently experiencing active conflict, yet they are different in other regards. This premise provides the basis for comparison while allowing for the opportunity to draw some general conclusions about advances made toward furthering women's rights.

a. WPS Implementation in Egypt

Egypt was the first country in the Arab world to ratify one of the key conventions on women's rights—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) [28]. Egypt also played a key role in establishing the abovementioned LAS Regional Action Plan, titled *Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security—Executive Action Plan 2015–2030*, to reflect the objectives of UNSCR 1325 [29]. Although Egypt has not yet developed its NAP, it was announced in 2019 that the NAP development would be undertaken by a partnership comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Council for Women, and the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), as well as in cooperation with other relevant national entities [29]. To date, however, the NAP has not yet been officially endorsed. According to a CCCCCPA representative, Egypt's NAP is currently in draft format and in the final stages of review, after which the document will be officially adopted [30].

Notwithstanding the absence of a formal NAP, there are a number of relevant substantial developments regarding Egypt's progress in this space. Egypt developed a National Strategy to Eliminate Violence Against Women (2015–2020), a National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women (2016–2030), and has also submitted a comprehensive report on the *Progress Made in the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)* from 2014 to 2019. Although the BPfA progress report does mention the steps taken toward commencing the process for the development of the NAP in Egypt [31], neither of the two abovementioned national strategies makes any mention of UNSCR 1325 or the WPS Agenda more broadly. Under the National Strategy for Empowerment is a protection pillar with a stated goal to “eliminate the negative practices that threaten women's lives, safety and dignity, prevents their effective participation in all spheres, including all forms of violence against women...” [32]. The National Strategy to Eliminate Violence Against Women includes the four pillars of prevention, protection, services intervention, and legal prosecution and is stated as having been developed to further Egypt's commitment to both BPfA and CEDAW [33].

According to the previously mentioned ESCWA report and in the context of actions taken toward implementation of the WPS Agenda, the report stated that “while some

Arab States have been hesitant to directly address the agenda, their progress in gender equality policies, legislation and programmes has inadvertently furthered it” [27]. This situation is clearly evident in the Egyptian case, in which there appears to be a reluctance to explicitly reference WPS, whether intentional or not. The communication with CCCPA’s representative on WPS policy reveals that what is being witnessed in Egypt is quite common when it comes to perceptions regarding WPS, namely that there are very often silos between women’s empowerment on one hand and issues relating to women’s peace and security on the other, and this siloed nature can be attributed to a “conceptual separation between WPS as a security issue, and empowerment and gender equality as a human rights issue” [30].

b. WPS Implementation in Jordan

The Jordanian National Action Plans (JONAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 were developed in an inclusive and participatory manner, led by the Jordanian National Commission for Women and technically supported by UN Women. JONAP was adopted in two phases for the periods of 2018–2021) and 2022–2025.³ The Cabinet endorsed the first JONAP (2018–2021), referred to as JONAP I, in 2017 and promulgated in 2018, in response to Jordan’s security and military challenges at the time, which included the influx of Syrian refugees and the rise of radicalization conducive to violence and terrorism [34]. JONAP I specifically responded to the 2015 UNSCR 2242, which emphasized the role of women and civil society organizations as essential partners in preventing and standing against violent extremism [34]. JONAP I complemented existing frameworks that address human rights, equality, protection, and equal participation of women, namely the National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2013–2017), the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (2016–2025), Jordanian Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis, and Jordan’s Vision 2025 [34]. JONAP I offered a gender-based approach toward the four WPS pillars and aimed to demonstrate Jordan’s commitment to maintaining peace and security, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and responding to women’s security and needs in light of the Syrian crisis [34].

JONAP I set up four strategic goals, and their main indicators can be summarized as follows:

1. Achieve gender responsiveness and meaningful participation of women in the security sector and peace operations by increasing the percentage of women in the security sector in general and in leadership positions in particular. Additionally, the indicators include increasing the percentage of women participating in peacekeeping missions and the number of security sector institutions with gender advisors.
2. Achieve the meaningful participation of women in preventing radicalization and violent extremism and in national and regional peacebuilding by increasing the

³ The second JONAP (2022–2025) is finalized and approved but has not been officially launched yet at the time of writing this paper. Its launching was postponed since September 2022.

percentage of women participating in developing national policies to prevent radicalization and mediation networks. Additionally, the indicators include an increase in the number of women, men, and youth with “changed religious concepts of gender roles and tolerance” [34] and an increase in the funding allocation to community-based programming on tolerance.

3. Ensure the availability of gender-sensitive humanitarian services that are safely accessible by Jordanians and refugees by increasing the percentage of women aware of the services available, increasing the number of women providing and accessing humanitarian services, and increasing the percentage of the target group’s awareness of the consequences of gender-based violence (GBV).
4. Foster a community culture that recognizes gender-specific needs, the importance of gender equality, and the role of women in peace and security by increasing the percentage of the population that acknowledges women’s contribution to peace and security and the number of educational policies on WPS and gender-responsive curricula.

JONAP II represents a continuation of Jordan’s commitment to strengthen women’s meaningful and equal participation in peace and security in Jordan and its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda 2030 of leaving no one behind, particularly vulnerable women [35]. Moreover, JONAP II is guided by “comprehensive security” principles that reflect personal, social, environmental, and health security and safety from violence and human trafficking [35]. Similar to JONAP I, the national plan came in response to local vulnerabilities that include the continued response to the refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in a percentage increase in the reported cases of domestic violence, the consequences of food and economic insecurities because of the pandemic lockdowns, and local efforts to prevent violent extremism, taken into consideration addressing the main drivers and better understanding of women’s roles in all their diversity. JONAP II also aligns with Jordan’s national strategies, including the National Strategy for Women (2020–2025), the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (2016–2025), the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (2020–2022), and the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan that acknowledges the role of women in response measures to crises and emergencies such as climate change and a gender-based vulnerability to such conditions.

JONAP II sets four strategic outcomes that also incorporate the lessons learned from JONAP I implementation, namely the importance of including men and boys in gender balancing and gender mainstreaming efforts and awareness, and close cross-sectional work with ministries and civil society organizations. The outcomes are summarized as follows [35]:

1. Women participate at all levels in Jordanian security, military, diplomatic, and justice sectors and ensure gender-responsive measures are implemented in these sectors.

2. Women participate in decision-making for prevention and response to crises, climate change, and emergencies.
3. Women and girls in Jordan, especially from marginalized groups, can safely access gender-responsive social protection and basic humanitarian services.
4. School, media, religious, and community leaders and young men and women promote gender equality and the prevention of GBV, discrimination, and violent extremism.

Thus, JONAP II presents a unique opportunity to address the gender needs of all women, including youth, women with disabilities, refugees, and the most vulnerable women, and to build strong networks with civil society organizations to address GBV, equality, and the impact of climate change.

4. Framing of WPS Frameworks in Egypt and Jordan

Egypt and Jordan have made significant progress and shown great commitment to gender mainstreaming and gender-balancing efforts by setting national agendas for women's empowerment and protection against violence. In Egypt, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the framing of WPS because of the lack of an official and publicly accessible NAP. Still, Egypt's activities and perspectives can nonetheless indicate how the WPS agenda is conceptualized broadly. A gender policy advisor working in Egypt at a leading multilateral development institution stated that in the Egyptian case, policies relating to gender equality have better chances of success if they can be directly linked to Egypt's higher political objectives, which are inherently tied to its broader objectives of economic growth, of which women's empowerment can be a component. In the context of WPS, she stated that there is a tendency to deprioritize instruments such as the WPS for countries that are not currently experiencing active conflict due to the perception that these policies should be more pronounced for those countries in fragile situations [36]. This perspective aligns with Egypt's official statement made by its permanent representative to the UN at the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security in 2010 in the context of the secretary general's report (S/2009/465). The permanent representative, in response to the proposed indicators to monitor the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 resolution, said that although Egypt has been supportive of the resolution, "these indicators—if approved—should only apply to the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict situations" [37].

Nevertheless, Egypt's efforts that have preceded the development of its NAP should not be overlooked, especially in the context of its championing and understanding of the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda, which very much informs the current development of its NAP [30]. In 2019, Egypt hosted the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development to set up a platform to operationalize the 2015 SDGs and the 2016 twin resolutions on sustaining peace (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282) [38]. Furthermore, it is expected that Egypt's NAP will reflect its understanding of women's social roles and spheres of influence in the context of some of Egypt's security concerns, including terrorism, which is expected to see a strong emphasis on enhancing women's roles in the prevention

and detection of radicalization because of their unique social positioning, and migration [30] because of Egypt's position as a host for refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries; in this respect, the pillar of protection is expected to figure prominently. The emphasis on issues such as radicalization and migration, in particular, highlights the inherent human security elements that are incorporated in Egypt's conceptualization of WPS. In these instances, the referent objects of security are not just the state but the individual as well, thereby deepening and broadening the conceptualization of security in Egypt with respect to the WPS Agenda.

Jordan was the fourth country after Iraq, Palestine, and Tunisia to adopt an NAP, with a focus on counterterrorism and prevention of extreme violence [9]. Jordan also set strategic plans for the participation of women in the military sector and peacekeeping missions, reporting an average increase of 2.2% since 2017 in the security and military sectors and an increase from 8.65% in 2018 to 11.5% in 2021 in the UN peacekeeping missions [37]. Jordan has also focused on promoting gender equality through education and media and reported an increase in media coverage on WPS issues to 10% and a 5% increase in men's support of women working in security [35].

It is important to acknowledge the progress being made in women's participation in the security sector and Jordan's commitment to women's protection from violence, especially refugees. Nonetheless, advocating for a human security approach to implement the WPS Agenda would shift the strategic goals and indicators from focusing on increasing the number of women in specific sectors to rethinking women's role in the security sector as a whole, including access to and contribution to efforts in the prevention of violence, disarmament, peace negotiations, and nuclear security. Therefore, integrating a human security approach would also entail working with the whole society to address the drivers for radicalization for men and women, including social and economic marginalization, and the gendered impact of radicalization on society. A human security approach would enable open dialogue between decision-makers and the youth, freedom of expression, building resilient communities, economic empowerment, and mitigating the impact of disasters, crises, and climate change.

The language of protection reflected in the WPS Agenda in the MENA region and the focus on increasing the number of women in the security sector has drawn critical analysis. It has been argued that it promotes a masculine framing of security where hard power is central to conflict resolution and peacebuilding and potentially undermines women's role in conflict prevention [25]. In the Arab region, war, conflict, and the ongoing violations of human rights in Palestine and Gaza exacerbate this masculinized framing of security in the region, the framing of the WPS Agenda from a hard security lens and the continued perception of the constant need to protect women as the most vulnerable. The geopolitical landscape of conflict in the region also reinforces the opinion that women's rights, women's role in peace and security, and the gendered impact of war on women are secondary. Moreover, the coupling of peace and security led WPS to be limitedly framed within security discussions away from the feminist lens of an anti-war and rights-based agenda to one "marking wars safer for women" [9, 39].

5. Conclusion

The WPS Agenda, with a feminist lens, lends itself to a human security approach that advocates for an antiwar, disarmament, and people-centered approach to safety and security that ensures the well-being of individuals within their environment and communities. A human security approach focuses on peace rather than managing conflicts and necessarily calls for the participation of the whole society, a shift from a state-centric military approach to security, protection from violence, and increasing the capacity and opportunity for individuals [40]. More importantly, a human security approach to implementing the WPS Agenda understands that women's participation in the security sector is conditional for sustainability. Therefore, DEI efforts to increase the number of women in the nuclear security sector miss the sustainability mark and narrowly focus on gender quotas instead of conceptualizing the diverse roles of diverse women and the gendered impact of security issues as fundamental to justice, human development and dignity, prosperity, and peace.

Internationally, the WPS Agenda is distinct from relevant security policies, especially in the nuclear security sector, by its lack of full integration within the security sector and its accompanying policies and approaches. The Egypt and Jordan cases demonstrate that WPS frameworks, whether implemented through national strategies separate or in tandem with a WPS national action plan, consider women's inclusion as progress toward increased accessibility to decision-making, which is indeed monumental. However, we advocate for an even stronger stance that frames women's inclusion in the security sector as fundamental to the sector's own sustainability and progress.

Understanding DEI efforts in nuclear security in the context of the larger WPS Agenda allows us to situate DEI within the national strategic goals of peace and security. The WPS Agenda would shift the efforts from advocating for women's roles and contributions in limited avenues to working as a society and through society's institutions, systems, and organizations to eliminate and address the challenges for gender mainstreaming and gender balancing in the security sectors. Although this analysis demonstrates the initial successes witnessed in Egypt and Jordan toward incorporating WPS into the countries' larger peace and security objectives, the foundational elements of DEI have not yet achieved the same status. In this regard, there is still room to elevate DEI as a core and critical component of contributing to these objectives—the consideration of the vital role of DEI in nuclear security has the potential to further this pursuit.

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