Reciprocal institutional visibility: Youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations

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Abstract

Within the United Nations' architecture formal recognition of the contributions of historically marginalised individuals and communities to peacebuilding denotes a positive shift in rhetoric and practice. Alongside broader institutional moves towards 'sustaining peace'; the emergence of a 'Youth, Peace and Security' Agenda since 2015 formalises attention to youth as positive contributors to peacebuilding and in responding to violence. This article situates the Youth, Peace and Security agenda within broader institutional and academic attention on 'inclusive peace'. It considers the ongoing challenges in legitimising youth inclusion; and positions this emergent agenda in relation to the gains made by the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and the establishment of the UN's sustaining peace agenda. These explorations demonstrate the value of considering the evolution of inclusive peace agendas together, while remaining mindful of their distinctive characteristics, to better understand the potential of inclusive approaches to peace. It argues that the YPS agenda should be understood as a key element of shifts in UN peacebuilding practice towards inclusivity that enable visibility and legitimacy to a broader range of peace actors. We suggest that greater recognition of the contributions of youth to the broader 'inclusive and sustaining peace' mandates is needed.

Introduction

This article examines the emergence of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda within the broader context of the institutional architecture associated with creating inclusive peace and security mechanisms. It argues that the YPS agenda should be understood as a key element of shifts in UN peacebuilding practice towards inclusivity that facilitates visibility and

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legitimacy for an broader array of peace actors. Without greater acknowledgement of the contributions of youth to the broader 'inclusive and sustaining peace' mandates claims to inclusivity within the UN architecture remain largely conceptual. Recognition of the contributions women and youth make to informal peace practices have become commonplace as both demographics have sought to increase the visibility of their experiences during violence and instability. In contrast, their participation in the formal structures that institutionally recognise and enable peacebuilding practices are more recent.

The UN's engagement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding practices has evolved from a non-interventionist holding of the line between belligerent forces, to a complex, multi-institutional industry that includes a wide range of interventionist activities designed to support and strengthen institutions and communities and respond to emergency needs. This evolution reflects shifting norms about best practice within the UN architecture which prioritise responsive and inclusive approaches to insecurity and building peace. The emergence of holistic approaches to peace echo developments within the peace and conflict field more broadly, which recognise expansive notions of who participates in peace building. At the centre of these shifts is the emergent perception that local knowledge and situated expertise about solutions to violence produce more durable peace and stability. Existing efforts to harness local buy-in through an inclusive peace agenda prioritise the voices of women, civil society and local elites. More recently formal practices have sought to capitalise on the rapidly evolving YPS agenda to lend legitimacy to the inclusive mandates of this formal peacebuilding architecture. Yet, the opening of these institutional spaces to facilitate inclusive peace remains sporadic and inconsistent particularly with respect to decision-making and implementation.

The unanimous passage of the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) places youth and youth-led efforts firmly within the broader peace and security discourse (UNSC, 2015). The resolution compels international actors (donors and institutions), states and youth groups to work together on the development of holistic approaches to sustainable peace. This evolution of the peacebuilding agenda to acknowledge the unique impact of conflict on youth, and their capacity to participate in peace and security practices also coincided with the 15th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and the release of the global impact report on WPS, which evaluated "best practices" and challenges associated with the development of a gender inclusive peacebuilding mandate (UN Women, 2015). Two subsequent YPS resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020)

have also continued to expand the formal institutional architecture for youth inclusive peace. The concurrent evolution of these "inclusive" agendas has produced a set of interrelated frameworks for the international community to employ in their pursuit of sustainable peace. While the inclusive mandates of these agendas are becoming increasingly visible within the formal structures of the UN, the shifts that facilitated these developments have been slow, partial, and hard-won. Efforts to substantively centre youth participation and the YPS agenda have evolved despite structural and normative barriers that continue to relegate their voices to the margins.

Alongside efforts to implement and engage with these inclusive peace and security agendas, there was growing consensus across the UN that the formal peace architecture needed to reframe its approach to peacebuilding. At the broadest level this took the form of a review of the peacebuilding architecture and the passing of simultaneous resolutions in 2016 in the UN General Assembly (262) and the Security Council (Res 2282) on 'sustaining peace'. The 'sustaining peace' agenda offers a more expansive mandate that is substantively inclusive of a broader range of voices. This comprehensive agenda within the formal peacebuilding structures acknowledges that conflict, violence and instability are cross cutting events that impact communities and individuals in unique ways and thus practices ought to meaningfully engage with their voices, agency and interests. Together, institutional efforts to expand inclusion through the creation and evolution of specific agendas, as well as through high level reviews and overarching resolutions on 'sustaining peace', can be understood as complementary processes that enable visibility and legitimacy for a broader range of peace actors.

As efforts to operationalise inclusive peace become more diverse scholars and practitioners must be increasingly mindful of emergent tensions between collaboration and competition within the international system. Whilst WPS and YPS are complementary and share intersecting priorities, their distinctive character also has the potential to foster competition, as advocates seek access to limited resources and visibility, particularly within the formal UN architecture. As such, it is crucial that we recognise and mitigate the structural conditions which perpetuate competition and thus create opportunity gaps across these inclusive agendas. Attending to the synergies and convergences is also necessary for ensuring that the visibility and contributions of women, children and youth are not underestimated or mischaracterized. This concurrent nature whilst seemingly self-evident is often misrepresented particularly when considering the decision-making and implementation capacity of youth within formal

structures. Given this, we suggest that greater recognition of the contributions of youth to the broader 'inclusive and sustaining peace' mandates is needed.

By locating the emerging YPS agenda within broader institutional moves towards inclusive peacebuilding approaches, this article explores the shifts in scholarship and practice towards the institutionalisation of youth-inclusive peacebuilding. As such this article provides an historical account of the institutional development of YPS and considers the agents and structures that have influenced the agenda. This account is situated in the context of broader efforts to expand who participates in formal peacebuilding. It builds on and draws together two critical theoretical literatures: on the agency of youth in international relations, and peace and conflict specifically; and on debates around 'inclusive' peace.

Both authors have undertaken separate research projects on aspects of the establishment and development of the YPS agenda[1], including document analysis, process tracing, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders within the UN, adult civil society, and youth-led organisations. This article emerges from conversations about that work, drawing on knowledge and insights gained to inform its argument. While this material has been instrumental in our thinking on these topics, it is not directly engaged in this article, as our purpose is rather to situate the YPS agenda within a broader discourse about inclusive peace and complementary agendas at the UN.

This article proceeds in four sections. It first begins by situating the shift towards youth-inclusive peace practices within the literature and outlining the ground-breaking emergent YPS agenda. This corrects a pervasive overlooking of youth in considerations of peacebuilding and establishes the legitimacy of the claim for youth inclusion. The second section of the article examines the logics of expanding the mandate of inclusivity in peacebuilding theory and practice. To do this we examine the theoretical debates and practices of institutionalisation of the idea of inclusive peace. The third section considers concurrent agendas for inclusion, in particular the important legacy of the WPS agenda in opening space for the YPS agenda and advancing inclusive practices in concrete terms. Together the explorations of the second and third sections of the article demonstrate the value of considering the evolution of these agendas together, whilst also remaining mindful of their distinctive character, to better understand the potential of inclusive approaches to peace. Finally, the fourth section examines the implications

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[1] [ETHICS APPROVALS REDACTED FOR PEER REVIEW]

of institutionalising youth inclusion and the opportunities and potential issues the YPS agenda will need to navigate going forward. Critical engagement with structural and normative barriers for youth inclusion offers learning opportunities for those interested in the implementation of inclusive peacebuilding practices. Together the four sections of this article advance the argument that the YPS agenda should be understood as a key element in the evolution of UN peacebuilding practice towards inclusivity. This shift enables visibility to a broader range of peace actors, thus attention to the contributions of youth strengthens the mutual legitimacy of broader 'inclusive and sustaining peace' mandates.

Youth are often overlooked within the scholarship on formal peacebuilding practices. However, the increasing visibility of efforts for inclusive peace and the YPS agenda offer evidence that expansive considerations of who participates in peace building are important for the durability of the peace. The YPS agenda offers an important addition to inclusive peace with implications for policy, diplomacy, and the success of building enduring peace. The new, broader agenda has opened a space that is not youth-specific, but which demonstrates the crucial importance of including youth in discussions of building inclusive peace.

Considering Youth as Peacebuilders

Despite the historical overlooking of marginalised communities by the UN and other international institutions, youth have long been centrally involved in peacebuilding at local levels. Recent scholarship has sought to understand the disconnect between formal and informal demonstrations of agency, visibility and capacity within the peace and conflict fields (Millar, 2013; Bjorkdahl, 2007; Bjorkdahl and Gusic, 2015; Bjorkhdahl and Hoglund, 2013; Zahar, 2012; Talentino, 2012). Where youth are concerned, policymaking has historically ignored their substantive contributions to peace, reconciliation, and development (Altiok et al, 2020; Berents, 2015, 2018; Pruitt, 2015; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Mollica, 2017a). Representations of young people rely on limited and gendered stereotypes that render their participation invisible, particularly at the institutional level. In policy and practice young women are commonly characterised as helpless victims and young men are traditionally cast as potential violent spoilers to peace processes (Pruitt 2015; Altiok forthcoming; Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015; Simpson 2018). Refuting these characterisations, advocates and academics have argued that recognising youths' substantive contributions to the peace and security architecture at an institutional level is crucial to ensuring sustainable peace and

development (among others, see: Özerdem and Podder, 2015; Pruitt and Lee-Koo, 2017; Mollica, 2017b; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2017; Simpson, 2018; Altiok and Grizelj, 2019).

Characterisations of youth as a threat, or a 'problem to be solved' have posed an enduring challenge to including youth in peacebuilding efforts. These dominant discourses of young people which assume propensity to violence, risky behaviour, and peace-disruption have overshadowed the productive contributions made by youth in responding to conflict and constructing peace and has legitimised their exclusion from consideration as positive contributors (see for example Distler, 2017; Bolten, 2012; Sommers, 2011). These framings have been strengthened as a result of the 'war on terror' from the 2000s (Maira, 2016) and the rise of the issue of violent-extremism (Altiok, forthcoming). These simplistic and limited narratives elide the fact that a majority of youth do not become involved in violence and instead are focused on education, employment, care work and productive lives (Ansell, 2016; Simpson, 2018).

The contributions of youth, and youth-led organizations are an under examined source of agency and leadership within the post-conflict justice and peacebuilding space (Simpson, 2018: 25). Despite pervasive disregard, youth have been actively working for peace and security in many contexts globally (UNOY and SFCG 2017). These organizations have a unique stake in the outcome of peacebuilding practices and have demonstrated their capacity to contribute to sustainable peace in diverse, substantive and innovative ways (McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Pruitt, 2015; Grizelj 2019; UNOY and SFCG, 2017). While young people have a history of mobilising to challenge the status quo, until recently their agency has evolved alongside formal structures rather than within them. The emergence of the YPS agenda should be understood as concurrent to institutional efforts towards sustaining and inclusive peace. The evolution of these approaches share parallels, which creates a reciprocal legitimacy for their aims within the UN architecture.

In 2015, unanimous adoption of the landmark thematic UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) formalised recognition of young people's peacebuilding efforts and embedded youth within considerations of this key UN organ. Resolution 2250 places youth and youth-led efforts firmly within the broader peace and security discourse; by urging greater representation of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflict. It recognises "the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion

of peace and security" and encourages Member States to include youth in responding to peace and security challenges (UNSC, 2015). This articulation is significant, as it is the first-time youth have been so explicitly recognised as positive contributors. The resolution identifies five pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration.

The passage of Resolution 2250 established an agenda for 'Youth, Peace and Security' at the UN and beyond. This rhetorical shift towards recognising the potential 'peace dividend' of youth has been particularly evident in efforts by advocates towards Resolution 2250 and the establishment of the YPS agenda. Advocates challenged the deficit framing of youth, instead arguing for the potential of their positive contribution to be recognised (UNOY & SFCG 2017, Simpson, 2018; Amman Youth Declaration, 2015). Shifting the narrative around youth to understanding youth as 'part of the solution not part of the problem' (Simpson, 2018) was an explicit aim of advocates for a UNSC Resolution (Berents and Prelis, 2020). A coalition of partners, outside and within the UN, were key in building support for this framing of positive youth participation and inclusion. Known at the time as the Interagency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (Working Group) (now the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security)[2], the Working Group/Global Coalition was and is co-chaired by a representative from the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, international NGO Search For Common Ground, (SFCG) and youth-led peacebuilders network United Network of Youth Peacebuilders (UNOY). Members built on existing frameworks but moved consciously away from seeing youth issues as issues of 'development' or only social-cultural in nature. Instead they worked to shift to understanding youth as centrally affected by and a key actor in responding to insecurity and actively building peace.

Efforts by the members of the Working Group included lobbying and advocacy within and outside of the UN. Significantly, the Working Group, with the assistance of the first ever UN Secretary General's Youth Envoy, 29-year-old Ahmad Alhendawi, were successful in convincing Jordan to champion the agenda during its time as president of the UNSC in 2015. Momentum was gained throughout the year, culminating in the UNSC resolution. In April 2015

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[2] The Working Group was established under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth and Development, which was created in 2010. From 2012 the Working Group expanded its efforts to position itself beyond the UN as a global space for strengthening the role of youth in peacebuilding. Since 2018 the Working Group has reframed itself as the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security.

Jordan chaired an Open Debate in the UNSC on the "Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace'. They also then hosted a Global Youth Forum in Amman, Jordan in August 2015, where youth leaders and advocates from around the world came together to discuss youth inclusion and adopted the "Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security", which was framed as the desires and demands of youth themselves. On December 9, Jordan introduced Resolution 2250 to the UNSC where it was unanimously adopted.

Youth do face unique challenges and risks; however dominant discourses that construct youth as *at risk* and *a risk*, miss, in the words of the Progress Study, the 'transformative potential of this generation' (Simpson, 2018: xiii). The tension between seeing youth as potentially positive contributors to peace and youth framed within discourses of deficit and securitisation has been, and continues to be, an enduring challenge to the agenda (Altiok et al, 2020). The success of the agenda was, in part, due to a heightened attention on youth as potential risks in the context of global attention on violent extremism in 2014 and 2015[3] and this is evident in the language of the April 2015 Open Debate and in Resolution 2250 itself. While attention to young people's vulnerability to recruitment and participation in violence--whether conflict or violent extremism--is crucial, a more complex picture is needed to ensure the meaningful inclusion of *all* youth (Simpson, 2018; Altiok, forthcoming). These challenges of the framing of youth will continue to be a key obstacle to the agenda as it moves forward and highlight a particular manifestation of the challenges the broader inclusive peace mandate of the UN also faces.

Since 2015 attention on the role of young people has grown and diversified. The YPS agenda now encompasses a wide range of formal and informal mechanisms and practices. This includes two further UNSC resolutions: Resolution 2419 (2018) specifically calling for youth inclusion in peace processes and Resolution 2535 (2020) that reinforces and operationalises the political commitment to the agenda. Going forward, Resolution 2535 requires a biennial report on progress on all three YPS resolutions, giving YPS a secure place on the UNSC's agenda. At the UNSC Open Debate on YPS in April 2018, the presentation of a progress study on YPS, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*,

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[3] This attention to CVE was not unique to the emergent YPS agenda --attention to CVE and counter-terrorism is evident in the WPS Global Study also and other facets of the UN's review of approaches to peacebuilding (Coomaraswamy and Kenney 2018). However, when it comes to youth, there is a particular "policy panic" (Simpson 2018) concerning their potential delinquency that is not as explicit in other fora.

mandated by Resolution 2250, demonstrates the work young people are already doing and makes recommendations for working with young people for peace and security (Simpson, 2018). Beyond the UNSC, the adoption of resolutions and statements on YPS regional bodies including the European Union and the African Union have also contributed to the institutional architecture on youth, peace and security. Some countries have begun to establish National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS following the model of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, regional youth leadership positions such as the AU's Youth Envoy have been created, and funding streams at the UN and regional levels have been established to support work within the YPS framework.

The institutionalisation of youth inclusion in peace and security is a testament to the work of many individuals and groups to change normative assumptions about young people's role in violence and peacebuilding. It was also part of broader shifts within the UN and international community around inclusive peace, evidenced also by the timing: the passing of Resolution 2250 occurred four months before the simultaneous General Assembly and UNSC resolutions on 'sustaining peace'. This demonstrates a commitment to the expansion of who is included in formal spaces of peacebuilding. The YPS agenda is also indebted to the achievements and advances made by the WPS agenda in the previous two decades, as discussed further below. Together these efforts represent the creation of a space of mutually reinforcing legitimacy for more inclusive peace and security practices.

Institutionalising Inclusive Peace

We now turn to examine the evolution of the idea of 'inclusion' in theory and practice to situate this emergent agenda within broader efforts to expand who participates in peacebuilding. Formal peacebuilding is constantly developing to reflect normative evolutions associated with beliefs about what constitutes 'best practice.' Peace practices adopted by the UN system have traditionally 'favoured technocratic approaches' underpinned by the principles of 'neutrality and efficiency' (Mac Ginty, 2012: 288). This approach to peace prioritises a 'hegemonic system' of institutional practices that is 'intolerant of alternatives and creativity' by giving prominence to the voices of elites and international actors (Mac Ginty, 2012: 288). In doing so, it fails to acknowledge the importance of ownership in pursuit of lasting peace and security. The rigid and static organisational structures that operationalise this technocratic approach to peace create exclusionary barriers and hierarchies within fragile communities which are not conducive to the development of stability.

To create sustainable peace, as such, decision-making and the implementation of peace practices must be broadly consultative to ensure local buy-in and to prevent the emergence of spoilers (Paffenholz, 2015a; Barnes, 2009). While originally scholarship concerning inclusive peace prioritised examinations of 'the local' broadly, recent discussions have evolved to consider who constitutes the local (Mac Ginty, 2008; McCanndless, 2016). Today, scholars and practitioners are focused on understanding and explaining how the unique voices and interests of historically excluded individuals, including women, youth and children lend legitimacy and visibility to peacebuilding practices (Tryggestad, 2014; Paffenholz and Ross, 2015).

At the 2005 World Outcome Summit, the international community committed to a framework for peacebuilding that acknowledged the substantive contributions of a diverse range of individuals. In doing so, it highlighted the importance of considering how the outcomes of peace processes impact those often excluded from the development and implementation of formal peacebuilding practices. This expansive approach to peace reflected shifts in practice and theorising about who participates in peace processes. Shifts in the discourse to recognise the importance of harnessing local political will have become increasingly prominent within the formal guidelines of the UN. The commitments outlined in the *2005 Summit Outcome* (A/RES/60/1) and later in the 2018 Secretary General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (2018) indicate that the international community has sought to move away from a strict adherence to technocratic peacebuilding practices towards a more responsive approach that ensures a wide range of actors are visible and heard. At the Summit the international community affirmed the '...need for a coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding' that marshalled the resources and capacity of a broad cross section of actors through a central mechanism, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (A/RES/60/1:137-38). Similarly, in the 2018 report the Secretary General recommended a reorganisation of the institutional structures to create a more holistic approach, which capitalises on regional and local knowledge and builds more effective peacebuilding partnerships (UN SG, 2018: para. 19).

The idea of sustaining peace is increasingly associated with inclusivity. Originally, the nature of this inclusion reflected only a narrow understanding of who should participate in peace

practices in particular, the involvement of women and civil society. As Paffenholz and Ross explain, 'both women and civil society are often imagined as "good society"' and thus their voices become 'an essential supporting component within peace processes' (2015: 15). These actors are considered key stakeholders due, in part, to institutional classifications, which frame their experiences and values in ways that align with the underlying mandates of formal peacebuilding mechanisms. Efforts by WPS advocates to institutionalise women's inclusion, paved the way for other inclusive agendas in the peacebuilding space, most notably youth and children. The inclusion of women and youth in both conflict prevention and in peacemaking results in more stable, durable solutions to these peace and security challenges (Kapur and Rees, 2018; Krause, Krause and Bränfors, 2018; Simpson, 2018). Such recognition therefore has enabled the development of peace practices that are more responsive to the needs and ownership capacity of a broad range of actors.

Including the voices of individuals and demographics whose perceptions of what constitutes peace diverge from formal and institutionalised frameworks has the potential to foster legitimacy of these practices. Scholarship on the effectiveness of peacebuilding and reconciliation notes a link between political will, local buy-in and the durability of peace (Jeffery and Mollica, 2017; Fortna 2018; Barnes, 2009). Moreover, empirical examinations of peace processes demonstrate that the quality of inclusion is a key indicator for determining the overall sustainability of peace (Paffenholz, 2015b; Chopra and Hohe, 2004: 242; Donais and McCandless, 2017: 304). The more peacebuilding practices are grounded in substantive dialogue that extends beyond 'inter-elite bargaining and pact-making' the more potential there is for these to elicit wide-spread, local ownership, which encourages lasting stability and peace. Within the formal UN structures 'inclusive' agendas have increasingly begun to converge as a way to pursue a form of peace that gives greater ownership and visibility to the voices on the margins. This convergence of agendas, mostly notably the 'sustaining peace,' WPS and YPS agendas recognises the complexities associated with securing stability, and the diverse range of actors needed to facilitate this process.

The operationalisation of an inclusive mandate remains the central challenge as widespread community buy-in is necessary to ensure sustainable peace. However, institutional practices that prioritise the voices of local elites often ignore the needs of individuals that peacebuilding aims to address (Chopra and Hohe, 2004). Considerations of 'the local' as a homogenous group represents a persistent challenge for international peacebuilding efforts that aim to find a

balance between quality and quantity of inclusion (Donias and McCandles, 2017: 291). Resolving the tension between quantity and quality engagement requires an understanding of inclusion that is responsive to how traditionally marginalised groups conceive and cast their contributions to the peacebuilding process. Meaningful inclusivity requires "those with power to make space for those without, many of whom are likely to challenge the status quo" and thus question the voices central to peace process (Donias and McCandles, 2017: 292). Furthermore, inclusion is not an either/or imperative; to be meaningful inclusion requires the creation of space for all perspectives, both within traditionally marginalised groups and between them. Strengthening the institutional engagement of historically marginalised groups, such as women and youth, within the formal peacebuilding architecture requires traditional actors to cede some power. Inclusive peace therefore requires an approach to peace that prioritises broad social buy-in and acceptance beyond the elite level structures of the post-conflict community.

Recently, the international community has sought to evaluate and reframe the inclusive peace agenda to reflect developments surrounding who participates and what constitutes inclusion. A central part of this renewed commitment was the 2016 passing of concurrent resolutions; General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/262 and Security Council Resolution S/RES/2282. A notable addition to the discourse during these reviews was the specific inclusion of youth as key stakeholders. Specifically, the importance of building 'close strategic and operational partnerships' with youth organisations was highlighted as necessary to meet the 'challenge of sustaining peace' (A/RES/70/262: para. 11). This suggests that the traditionally excluded voices of youth are increasingly being recognised within the formal UN architecture as critical for sustaining peace. Broadly speaking, this acknowledgement reflects an emerging move towards meaningful inclusivity, which acknowledges the heterogeneity of actors. With these various mechanisms and formal recognition, this approach opens up the formal institutional architecture, creating space for a diverse range of voices.

Concurrent agendas for inclusive peace
One key success in diversifying voices is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which holds lessons for YPS and inclusive peacebuilding approaches broadly. Here we situate the institutionalisation of WPS and YPS to position them as concurrent agendas.

WPS has done much to open the space of peacebuilding to more diverse voices and experiences. In particular, the unique and evolving character of this agenda, reflected in its

combining of fundamental and adjacent norms[4] has advanced notions of conflict prevention, recovery, and human rights and paved the way for wide-spread social transformation that recognises the unique and complex nature of individual experiences (True & Wiener 2019: 553; Davies & True 2019). Over the past 20 years, WPS has evolved to allow for an iterative implementation process that is mindful of and responsive to contested ideas about peace, which are shaped by a broad cross-section of actors (True & Wiener 2019). Yet, scholars reflecting on the future for WPS also offer several notes of caution for the operationalisation of other inclusive peace mandates. Specifically, they highlight the importance of thinking critically about whose voices contribute to inclusive peacebuilding, when peace is sought, and how resources are distributed at the local level (see for example: Basu, Kirby & Shepherd 2020).

As one of the first formalised inclusive agendas within the UN system, WPS established a mandate through UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) for the substantive participation of women and girls (Chinkin, 2019). The ten WPS resolutions, reflect attempts by the international community to amplify the voices and experiences of women. The articulation of a gender inclusive mandate within these resolutions offers a roadmap for designing engagement strategies, while implementation efforts reveal important practical lessons. UN Resolution 1325 for example, has been widely critiqued due to a 'general lack of operational coherence' which has produced 'cumbersome and disjointed bureaucratic response[s]' to gender mainstreaming (UN Women, 2015: 14; Willet, 2010: 142). The tension this exposes between thematic intentions and practice informed recent evolutions in the implementation of WPS, which has shifted from an emphasis on standardisation toward a regional and local focus. As discussed below the emphasis on regional and local implementation in the WPS agenda has influenced YPS practitioners as they pursue peace that is both inclusive and responsive.

While at UNSC WPS remains underrepresented due to policy resistance, contested practice and the complexity of intersectionality (George & Shepherd 2016; Coomarasamy 2015); stakeholders have found dynamic ways to integrate and make visible WPS practices, particularly at the regional and local levels (True & Wiener 2019: 572). National Action Plans (NAPs), for example provide a public roadmap for the implementation of WPS practices at the country and regional level. As demonstrated, the fluid and distinctive nature of YPS shares

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[4] True and Wiener (2019:553) suggest that the presence of fundamental norms, including the "prohibition against the use of sexual violence in conflict", as well as adjacent norms that are "hidden or emerging- such as women's right to inclusion in peace processes" constitutes a "norm bundle" rather than a "normative agenda".

similarities with the normative character of WPS. The iterative implementation strategies of WPS practitioners offer a blueprint for action, which can be adapted to fit the specific objectives of other inclusive agendas.

In recent years, the YPS agenda has joined WPS in the pursuit of clearer institutional guidance for the development of inclusive peace practices. The identification of priority areas or "pillars"[5] for action, first within UN Resolution 1325 (2000) and later legitimised by their inclusion in UN Resolution 2250 (2015) has provided a strategic framework for operationalising inclusive peace. The prominence of these agendas within the broader institutional discourse, also indicates their growing importance to the formal peace and security architecture. For example, the 2005 Summit Outcome document reaffirmed states commitment to the 'full and effective' implementation of the WPS agenda. The formal acknowledgement of women's interests within the inclusive peace mandate reinforced the importance of meaningful gender mainstreaming at the institutional level. Where youth are concerned, the Secretary General (SG) in his 2018 report on sustaining peace, drew explicitly on the YPS agenda reinforcing the international community's formal commitment to inclusive peace. The SG notes that YPS 'offers opportunities to galvanize coherent UN engagement' for peace practices that harness the distinctive voices of youth' (UN SG, 2018: para. 28). Notable within the SG's statement is the recognition that youth have the capacity to substantively engage with the broader institutional agenda of the UN, rather than continuing to operate on the sidelines. The explicit inclusion of these two agendas within the institutional mandates of the UN highlights their capacity to lend legitimacy to the primary goal of building secure and peaceful societies.

Efforts to operationalise the YPS & WPS agendas demonstrate that the voices of traditionally marginalised individuals lend legitimacy to peace practices. However, substantive inclusion requires institutions to hear these diverse voices and to act on their suggestions. Despite incremental improvements, tokenistic engagement remains a persistent challenge. Previous

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[5] The "pillars" offer stakeholders thematic areas for strategic engagement with women and youth. One of the synergies between UN Resolution 1325 and 2250 is there commitment to participation, protection and prevention (For more on the WPS pillars see George & Shepherd 2016; For more on YPS pillars, Simpson 2018). The fourth pillars differ, while UN Resolution 1325 explicitly highlights the importance of relief and recovery, UN Resolution 2250 emphasizes disengagement and reintegration. Amongst other key distinctions is the formal inclusion partnerships as the "fifth" pillar in UN Resolution 2250. The addition of the partnership pillar in Resolution 2250 reflects the advocacy efforts of youth at the Amman Youth Forum which highlighted the importance of partnering with youth to the fulfilment of the other priority areas (Amman Declaration 2015).

attempts to include women and youth in peace processes have relied heavily on classifying them 'as a homogenous group' or 'faceless entity' (Senarathna, 2015: 82; Westendorf, 2013; Berents & Mollica, 2020). That is, their interests are conceived as linear and interchangeable irrespective of intersecting factors, such as class, race, disability and age (Özerdem & Podder 2015). Classifications that are unresponsive to the diverse character of these demographics create implementation barriers to the creation of meaningful and substantive inclusive agendas. WPS and YPS share structural and thematic synergies that demonstrate their status as concurrent agendas capable of adding legitimacy and visibility to the inclusive mandate of the international community. These similarities, however, should be considered critically to ensure that their conceptual diversity is understood and that comparisons do not perpetuate structural tendencies to homogenise the experiences of traditionally marginalised groups.

The YPS consultation process demonstrates that youth-led organisations possess considerable agency and capacity, as the work already being conducted by these groups in the informal space promotes practices created and implemented by youth (UNOY, 2017; Simpson, 2018). Yet, ensuring that institutional practices do not homogenise youth, to the detriment of their diverse voices and agency remains a significant concern when conceiving youth's role within the broader inclusive agenda of the UN peacebuilding architecture. To date, the international community's engagement has been slow and sporadic. Recent developments, however, including the publication of the progress report *The Missing Peace* (Simpson, 2018) demonstrate a commitment to more substantive inclusion within the formal peacebuilding architecture. Amongst the most notable and unique contributions of this report, was the use of a consultative process that engaged directly with the agency of all young people by 'reach[ing] out beyond easily accessible and elite youth, to young people who would not ordinarily have a say in…global policy processes' (Simpson, 2018: 3). The pursuit of diverse voices in this formal process reflects an emerging trend within the inclusive peacebuilding field towards quality inclusion. This trend recognises and aims to harness the relationship between different notions of inclusion that exist within communities and ownership (Donais and McCandless, 2017: 304).

As the operational challenges of the WPS agenda highlight, the politics of peacebuilding, in particular the persistence of elite power structures, as well as the persistent adherence to technocratic rules and norms in practice, continue to present significant obstacles for the broader inclusive agenda. The belief that unique perspectives should be harnessed is an

enduring legacy of the WPS mandate, as the diversity of experience associated with these voices creates a more inclusive and representative mandate. Yet, ensuring that inclusion is meaningful is not without its challenges. Notably it is evident that formal structures often continue to perpetuate a hierarchy of experience, which excludes the very voices that these inclusive practices and mandates are attempting to amplify. While youth and women are increasingly visible in these structures, hearing and responding to their needs continues to present a significant challenge for policymakers.

Obstacles and Entry Points to Meaningful Youth Inclusion

Aspirations and efforts towards inclusive peace face normative, practice and technocratic hurdles. Here we highlight the obstacles and possibilities facing the YPS agenda. Enthusiasm for the nascent YPS agenda has seen a rapid increase in programs, funding, and rhetoric about youth inclusion, and even renewed attempts at youth mainstreaming. Like other efforts before now, the challenge is to create a process that does not constrain the agency and individual identities of youth organizations already working in the peacebuilding space. There is a need to find a balance between the initiative and creativity of organisations and individuals already operating in the space of youth peacebuilding (often, long before a formal agenda existed) and institutional mandates and agendas. We suggest that a more nuanced and cautiously optimistic response to the potential of Resolution 2250 is needed moving forward. Practitioners and scholars should utilise the resolution as one tool in an ever-expanding toolbox of youth engagement strategies to support young people's claims to legitimacy, authority, and visibility.

One way of moving towards finding this balance is evident in the efforts by advocates to 'regionalise' the YPS agenda. Support for this approach is reflected in the report by UN SG Guterres where he highlights the need to strengthen and further develop partnerships and collaborations between the UN and regional bodies (UN SG, 2018: 11-12). The need to 'regionalise' the YPS agenda is also recognised by those working for youth inclusion. Finding ways of making the broad mandate of Resolution 2250 applicable in diverse contexts and to be useful to support efforts to address the multitude of challenges youth face requires careful thought and planning moving forward.

There is clear evidence that regional bodies and organisations have picked up the call for youth inclusion. The African Union has actively linked the YPS agenda to its regional peace and security architecture, embedding it in institutional processes, as well as establishing visible

roles such as the AU Youth Envoy and a Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2018; African Union Commission 2020). The European Union has also sought to position itself as a proactive leader in this space through formal conferences and statements (Council of the European Union, 2018). In the Asia-Pacific, training on the YPS agenda has become a key priority for the UNFPA regional office, with the first round of engagement occurring July 2019 in Bougainville as part of the Gender/ Youth Promotion Initiative (UNOY, 2019). At national levels, and encouraged by the third UNSC resolution 2535 (2020), there are growing efforts to implement National Action Plans (NAPs) for YPS, building on strategies implemented by WPS, in an effort to make the agenda relevant and embedded in specific contexts. YPS advocates will have to navigate similar complexities and cautions around NAP implementation that have faced WPS efforts.

Developments in funding practices also reflect a commitment to embedding the YPS agenda within the formal UN structures. In 2016 the Peacebuilding Fund introduced the Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI) as part of a series of strategies aimed at sustaining peace by resourcing inclusive practices. To date, it has funded forty-eight projects on youth participation across 18 countries, investing approximately $57 million (United Nations Peacebuilding Fund 2020). Complicating access to resources through this program, is its launch alongside the Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI), which was first introduced in 2011. While the GPI and YPI are characterised as distinct programs the consideration of applications together through one bureaucratic process has the potential to perpetuate a conceptual joining that obscures the distinct needs and interests of each demographic. The obstacles associated with combining "womenandchildren" revealed by feminist scholarship offer an important lesson for the international community with respect to managing the implementation of these complementary programs (Brocklehurst 2006; Lee-Koo 2018). Specifically, it highlights the importance of balancing the interconnectedness and distinctness of inclusive agendas. Ensuring that youth-led peace practices are a funding priority, alongside women will contribute to the continued embedding of inclusive peace as a critical imperative for the formal UN architecture.

Youth face different challenges in different contexts, from access to employment and education, to risks posed by violence and conflict, to participation in decision making processes (Simpson 2018). Advocates for the YPS agenda are conscious that for the agenda to gain traction and truly open space for processes that are inclusive of youth, it needs to be adopted

in different contexts in different forms. The broadness of the agenda is its strength, but it also poses unique challenges.

Conclusion

This article has situated the Youth, Peace and Security agenda within broader institutional and academic attention on 'inclusive peace'. It has examined the space opened by normative shifts in peacebuilding practice at the UN which have enabled youth-inclusive spaces. Both the YPS agenda, formalised in 2015, and the 'sustaining peace' agenda, formalised in 2016, are indebted to the gains made by the WPS agenda in the preceding decades. The evolution of the WPS agenda within the formal UN architecture established as a critical imperative the need to substantively engage with the voices of groups traditionally marginalised by institutionalised peacebuilding. Meaningful inclusion of women in peace and security practices lends legitimacy to these processes as it creates conditions that encourage wide-spread political buy-in from local communities. At the same time, the increased engagement of institutional peace practices with the unique interests of women adds weight to discursive shifts which highlight the centrality of women and their political agency. This mutually reinforcing legitimacy has created space for oft-excluded young people. Youth have demonstrated that they have the agency to act as both architects of sustainable peace, as well as key contributors to efforts within the international community to create lasting and meaningful peace. Despite this, challenges to their agency and visibility within formal practices remain unaddressed and largely unacknowledged.

Through this article, we have positioned the emergent YPS agenda within the broader context of international efforts to sustain peace through prioritising substantive inclusion. We look to highlight the concurrent and mutually reinforcing nature of the various inclusive mandates which are evolving through the formal UN architecture, specifically WPS and their impact on opening space for youth inclusion. We have also outlined the ongoing tensions between securitized discourses of youth as a 'problem to be solved' and efforts to recognise youth as positive contributors to peace and security as they manifest in the language of YPS documentation and in efforts towards its implementation. We highlight attempts within the YPS agenda to shift the discourse away from classifications of youth as a homogenous group by highlighting the diverse ways that youth exercise agency, and in doing so lend legitimacy to the broader inclusive peace agenda. Through this exploration, this article draws attention to

a demographic that is disproportionately affected by conflict and insecurity, but frequently excluded in efforts to build peace.

This article has also examined debates around notions of 'inclusive peace' and contextualised UN efforts in this space. Normative shifts towards 'inclusive peace' create space for a more expansive mandate that is substantively inclusive of a broader range of voices. This broader agenda within the formal peacebuilding structures acknowledges the cross-cutting nature of conflict, violence and instability within these diverse communities. Moreover, this approach to peace recognizes that the impact of these events is often experienced differently within communities, and thus practices ought to meaningfully engage with these diverse responses to peace to ensure that they capture the unique voices, agency and interests of the local community. When attention is paid to gender and age formal peacebuilding practices become more responsive to contemporary peace and security challenges including forced displacement, peacebuilding, and preventing/countering violent extremism.

The new broader inclusive peace agenda has opened a non-youth specific space in which we can talk about and with youth to address pressing and diverse peace and security issues. The YPS agenda can be seen as a key element of shifts in UN peacebuilding practice towards 'inclusivity'. Within this, youth deserve closer attention for their potential to contribute to building sustainable peace at local, regional, and international levels. Paying attention to the YPS agenda as a key element of shifts in UN peacebuilding practice towards inclusivity evidences the mutually reinforcing legitimacy and visibility of a broader range of peace actors.

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