A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Canada's National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context

2022 will mark the end of the period covered by Canada's second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace & Security (WPS). This means that very likely, in the coming year as part of an anticipated white paper to strengthen Canada's broader feminist foreign policy (Government of Canada, 2020, section 6, subsection 12), a third NAP is expected to be published. This third NAP will outline Canada's updated commitments to women's participation, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the protection of women's and girl's rights in the peace and security sector (Global Affairs Canada, 2021).

In addition to the global response, Canada faces numerous domestic concerns regarding women's full, equal and safe participation in security and peace. Namely, sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), sexual harassment and inequality within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

The research for this major research paper (MRP) was conducted during the period of a second external review into sexual misconduct in the CAF, and its submission coincides with the release of the results of this review by former Justice Louise Arbour. Despite being specifically about the CAF, the Arbour report alongside the first external review by former Justice Marie Deschamps shed light on the nature and scale of the kinds of problems faced by a broader Defence sector facing a moment of social change towards gender equality.

In light of the coming policies, plans and reports, this MRP tracks the previous representation of women's participation in the Canadian defence sector, to understand the history of this issue and anticipate where Canada's approach may go from here.

1.2. Research Questions, Scope and Rationale

I will analyse the two available Canadian National Action Plans (for the periods of 2010-2016 and 2017-2022) on WPS with the following research questions in mind:

- How do these NAPs present the challenges of - and solutions to - women's participation in peace and security? (e.g., is it inward or outward facing, what solutions are proposed; using the research approach of: "What's the Problem Represented to be?")
- In defining the NAP's priorities in relation to the challenges and solutions, what are the gaps and missed opportunities for tackling gender-based inequality in peace and security?
- How can we understand these priorities and gaps by employing a transformational feminist lens and a capabilities approach?

This analysis is valuable because there is growing domestic pressure to address gender-based issues within Canadian national security bodies. Despite being an international initiative, I believe the NAP on WPS is an important opportunity to extend efforts to improve women's participation and prevent SGBV inwards *and* outwards. These research questions are important because they seek to understand the representation of women's participation, in order to highlight the underlying rationale that is driving current strategies to address the problem. By understanding how the Canadian government views the lack of women's representation, we are able to make sense of the proposed initiatives to increase participation and can offer informed criticism for suggested changes.

1.3. Methodological Frameworks

I will answer my identified research questions by analysing two publicly available government policy texts. Given the length constraints of this Major Research Paper (MRP), I limited my analysis to two official documents, and did not conduct interviews or field research.

In 2020, the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Francois-Phillipe Champagne, signalled the intention to release an official statement on Canada's full feminist foreign policy suite, beyond the individual initiatives like the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) and the NAP on WPS (Government of Canada, 2021; Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.2). Observers are still waiting for this comprehensive articulation, likely delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, given the looming expiration of the current (2017-2022) Canadian National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), a robust feminist analysis of the existing NAP on WPS is relevant and timely. The NAPs are publicly available and discursively represent the approach and general ethos of two different federal governments towards Women, Peace and Security over the span of eleven years.

In anticipation of a third NAP on WPS, and the speculated publication of a feminist foreign policy, this research aims to determine how the issue of women's participation in the Canadian peace and security sector is represented, and what is left unaddressed by that representation. By exploring how the issue is understood by the policy writers and stakeholders in their own words, it is possible to see where the focus lies for solving the issue, but also what is not brought to attention and thereby left unproblematised. This analysis highlights gaps and limitations in one former and one current policy text with the purpose of identifying ways to strengthen alignment with feminist principles for future policies. For this analysis, I selected Canada's current and former National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, covering the years 2010-2016, and 2017-2022.

The chosen methodology for this research is a combination of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) and a form of policy analysis called the "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach. Using these two methods together, it is possible to conduct a rigorous

policy analysis while remaining rooted in critical feminist principles and perspectives. As a researcher specializing in Gender Studies within the International Development sphere, it is imperative to have a robust feminist framework to approach the chosen policy texts, and to ground this discussion in improving the lives of women and girls at home and abroad.

Why Critical Discourse Analysis?

Given the availability of policy texts and the length requirements, this research embraces text-based, or discourse, analysis. Discourse analysis brings a rich and valuable analytical lens to the reading of policy texts because power begins with the language we use and the commitments we make in writing. For example, policy documents can set the tone for which issues are prioritized, which can determine whether (and how much) funding and resources are warranted for those priorities. The issues raised by governments in their policy texts are often both influenced by, and carry influence over, pertinent social issues of the time.

As one form of discourse analysis, *critical* discourse analysis “seeks to raise critical consciousness about the discursive dimensions of social problems" (Lazar, 2017, p.372). Discourse (text and talk) is a valuable site of inquiry for observing how society and culture construct experience, as language is purposefully selected to perform the function of constructing a description (Frost & Eliachaoff, 2012, p.47). By critically examining what language is selected and how problems and their solutions are presented in text, it is possible to detect how existing social orders and power asymmetries are either buttressed or challenged within the language we use every day.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) explores the relationship between language and power, as found in the basic discursive unit of communication: text. Specifically, text provides the context in which language is used and the priorities considered crucial (Wodak & Meyer,

2001, p.2). Emerging as a politically engaged form of radical linguistics, CDA holds that "[l]anguage is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimise relations of organised power" (Habermas in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.2).

Additionally, as a field, Critical Discourse Analysis takes the 'critical' component seriously, intentionally seeking to "draw consequences for political action" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.1). A critical analysis commits to changing unjust social orders, and this research embraces this critical stance and explicitly seeks to analyse the status quo in order to seek ways to better the lives of women and girls involved in the security sector and impacted by conflict globally.

Why <u>Feminist</u> Critical Discourse Analysis?

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis adds a gender lens to the critical analytical framework and specifically seeks gender justice. As the name suggests, FCDA is a framework for analysing text while being specifically attuned to the ways language can sustain or challenge gendered power dynamics and social orders. The explicitly feminist label is imperative to signal intent to analyze "the particularly insidious and oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in most social practices" (Lazar, 2005, p.3) and to overtly align with other bodies of feminist work and organizing.

Additionally, since 2017, the Canadian government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, has embraced the word "feminist" in its policy (e.g., the Feminist International Assistance Policy, and the suspected forthcoming feminist foreign policy white paper), therefore it is appropriate to use an overtly feminist methodology to analyze Canadian government policy documents. By reading the policy texts through a critical feminist lens, this research highlights how the Canadian government understands the issue of women's participation in the security

sector by identifying which gendered social norms are upheld, and which are challenged, in the language of the policy itself.

In addition to Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, I will use the "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) approach, as a secondary guiding methodological framework specific to analysing policy documents. The WPR approach fits the scope of this research because of its clarity and basic premise that "what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change)" (Bacchi, 2012, p.21). Each of Canada's National Action Plans propose strategies to address women's participation in the security sector, and in doing so, linguistically reveals what the 'problem' is, from the perspective of the various actors involved in enacting said policy.

Bacchi proposes six sequential guiding questions to ask about a policy or proposed change, as a way of discerning implicit representations of the 'problem' to be addressed, including: what's the problem, what presuppositions underpin this representation, how has this representation come about, what is left unproblematic, what effects are produced by this representation and finally, how/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? (2012, p.21). This research explicitly draws on two of the six WPR questions, what's the problem represented to be and what is left unproblematic, as a targeted and scaled-down approach to fit the scope of this paper.

By critically interrogating the representation of a problem (i.e., the representation of women's participation in peace processes and the security sector), it is possible to identify the base logic and assumptions at play, including what is left unproblematic or unaddressed, to ultimately think about the problem differently and propose new approaches to solutions. Bacchi emphasizes that the WPR approach considers, "policies *produce* 'problems' with particular

meanings that affect what gets done or not done, and how people live their lives" (2012, p.22), implying that how one produces a problem inevitably informs suggested solutions. By paying attention to the assumptions that underpin a particular policy, it is possible to understand it better than those who made it, and propose new representations of those it is about, inevitably leading to different solutions.

1.4. Research Methods and Limitations

Analysing the representation of women's participation in Canada's current and former NAP on WPS requires a thorough reading of each policy text, in addition to an in-depth understanding of the political context in which each NAP was developed, published, and implemented. In the analysis of each NAP, five steps are followed: 1) an overview of the policy document (length, style, structure, tone, and general comments on context), 2) isolation of the term "participation" using the word search function within the policy text, 3) application of the question "what is the problem (of women's participation) represented to be?", 4) analysis of the framing of the problem and the proposed solution through a transformational feminist lens, and lastly, 5) an exploration of what is not mentioned, is left unaddressed or is not problematised in the representation of the problem and the proposed solutions.

Following individual analyses of the two NAPs, in the discussion section there are in-depth comparisons of the five components mentioned above, including details of the political contexts of each NAP, supported by academic sources and media references from each time period. The findings are interpreted through a transformational feminist lens and using a capabilities approach, and I conclude by suggesting next steps for further research and policy direction based on both the trajectory of the two existing plans and the gaps and limitations in each that could be remedied for further feminist transformation.

The strengths of this research include: the public availability of the policy texts concerned; the narrow and deep focus on women's participation specifically, in order to rigorously understand one facet of the WPS agenda; the twelve-year period of time over which the two plans span which allows for historical comparison; and the recent expansion of literature on feminist foreign policy upon which this analysis draws extensively. It is thanks to these countless scholars and feminist organizations who are observing and scrutinizing the rise of feminism in public policy that this work builds its foundations and interpretations.

The limitations of this research include: my own positionality as an academic outsider to the defence sector, the inability of any one person to accurately speak on behalf of all women in a particular sector or organization, and the relationship between policy and practice that cannot be assumed to be guaranteed or direct. As a civilian observer of the defence sector, I can only attempt to understand the workplace behavioural norms and culture through the accounts of others, and while external perspectives can be useful in identifying blind spots, guidance from the people impacted by the issue at hand should lead the way for change.

Similarly, despite being a woman, I cannot speak on behalf of all women, nor can I assume that my understanding of gender inequality and power relations is the same as that of women impacted personally by this issue. Additionally, I write from a place of certain privileges (e.g., class, ability, race) which influence how I view women's participation and how I criticize the (in)action of institutions. Feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) best articulates intersectional theory in practice as "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p.1245). I offer one perspective, but inevitably fail to account for all the various grounds of identity that can valuably contribute insight on this topic.

In parallel with the reflections of scholar Janet Conway (2017), who describes a desire to "valorise the knowledge arising from activist practice and to bring critical intellectual resources to bear on it" (p.207), I acknowledge the importance of letting both lived experience and academia have roles in solution-finding, and as a cisgendered white woman, I commit to using what McIntosh (1989) refers to as "arbitrarily-awarded power" to do my best in trying to "reconstruct power systems on a broader base" (p.3).

Finally, as Parpart (2014) describes, the link between policy and implementation needs to be rethought, as "both are political processes…while policies set agendas, both policies and their implementation are deeply influenced by societal factors" (p.382). Analysing policy is a useful tool for understanding certain things about a policymaker, but it takes more than the right words to implement substantive change. Although it is an inevitable limitation of this policy-based research paper, I have added social and political context, where appropriate, in an attempt to acknowledge its influence and importance.

1.5. Theoretical Frameworks: Transformational Feminism and a Capabilities Approach

In this analysis I use transformational feminist theorizing and a capabilities approach to critically read the two selected policy documents. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is a global initiative to change the status quo, but it is rooted in national plans and implementation. This means UN member states are responsible for determining how they will each increase and maintain domestic recruitment of women into their own security sector, which ultimately contributes to international missions, peacekeeping efforts and the leadership of larger global security bodies. The overarching goal is to increase the number of women involved in peace and security worldwide, to transform the status quo from a sector that has historically not meaningfully included women, to one that does.

For this reason, it is important to highlight both the systemic and personal aspects of women's participation; how they are viewed as individual participants in domestic and global security spheres, and how policies and governing bodies at all levels can transform to allow women and girls to realise their capabilities. Transformational feminist theorizing looks to understand a gendered and power-laden world, and then change it for the better. A capabilities approach centres on a person's actual capacity to achieve their well-being, beyond the rights or freedoms they may formally hold. Together these frameworks position this analysis to look beyond an "add women and stir" approach, to not simply expect women to assimilate into systems designed by and for men, or to take on patriarchal mindsets over other women impacted by conflict. From this stance, national policy is an opportunity to transform international conflict and peace processes into an arena where women's meaningful participation and leadership is expected and valued.

Feminism

As more countries start to embrace "the f-word"[1] in their policies, we see how "feminism is experiencing a global renaissance" (Thomson, 2020, p.424). Undeniably, the term "feminist" has gained traction in policy and politics, especially in Canada since 2017, however, there is not yet a single common definition. Even Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) never explicitly defines feminism but states its support for "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" as "the best way to build a more inclusive and more prosperous world (Government of Canada, 2017a, p.vi).

Some critical observers have labelled FIAP as "mainstream liberal feminism that excludes many people and groups" (Morton, Muchiri & Swiss, 2020), or neoliberal feminist

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[1] Used in a witty way to refer to the word "feminism", indicating the politically charged nature of the term when used in public policy, see Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond (2016) on Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy.

'business as usual' (Parisi, 2020) partially because of the "high level of ambiguity as to how feminism is defined" (Rao & Tiessen, 2020, p.3). But, despite the criticisms, this centering of gender equality and broad embrace of feminism can also be viewed as important foundational progress (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.6), which others have argued signals important continuity, and a reflection of Canada's ongoing commitment to gender equality (Tiessen 2019, p.2).

Feminist civil society organizations have recently called on Canada to go further and "articulate its feminist foreign policy clearly, ambitiously and unequivocally" (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.1). Though it may be imperfect, research four years into FIAP's implementation shows that "Canada's NGO community has indicated a high level of support for Canada's FIAP" (Rao & Tiessen, 2020, p.2) as a step in the right direction. In their 2021 recommendations, Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group expresses a strong belief that "Canada is well-positioned to play a leading role in advancing feminist foreign policy alongside Sweden, France and Mexico." (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.2). Since then, Spain, Luxembourg and Libya have also adopted foreign policies that are self-described as feminist, making it a total of seven countries to do so (Thompson et al., 2021). Overall, if there is indeed global feminist momentum, then Canada, as a willing proponent of feminism and supporter of gender equality, could be poised to lead and influence with strong feminist-informed policy and political strategies.

In their proposed core principles, Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group identifies the need for *transformational* objectives, perspectives from global feminist movements, an intersectional approach, and a clear basis in human rights, among others (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.3). It is not enough to just draw attention to

gender inequality from a western perspective or “add women and stir” without fundamentally changing systems and frameworks (Parisi 2020, p.2). This emphasis on the need for transformation demands that feminist policy embrace a kind of change-oriented feminism that actively challenges the status quo.

For this reason, this research is grounded in transformational feminist theorizing, which draws on a diverse history of feminisms and feminist principles that seek to dismantle gendered power imbalances. This includes intersectionality, Third World feminism, Black feminist scholarship, transnational feminisms, African feminist scholarship, Indigenous feminisms, and grassroots global feminist organizing that has rallied for gender justice through systemic change. When applied to the WPS agenda, transformational principles include critical theorising, innovative and radical action, and deep political engagement to drastically change the security sphere (Lord & Tiessen, 2021, p.7).

Before going further, it is important to acknowledge the inherent tension between feminism and conflict, namely, that many feminist schools of thought keep abolition, pacifism, and non-violent resistance as central tenets. By this thinking, there could never be a truly feminist foreign policy that includes arms sales, military expansion or support for armed conflict in any way. In other words, some would argue that having a feminist policy while also manufacturing or selling weapons are inherently contradictory; there can be no such thing as a feminist arms dealer.

Further to this point, among their recommendations, the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group name demilitarization and disarmament as vital pillars of their proposed feminist foreign policy principles, including a call for reduction in military spending (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.4). Although peace processes and conflict resolution run

centrally through the Women, Peace and Security agenda, widespread demilitarisation and disarmament do not.

Canadian foreign policy is clearly moving in the direction of embracing the word 'feminist' and drawing on (some) feminist principles, including those offered through consultations with diverse civil society organizations. However, there is no indication that demilitarisation or disarmament will feature in any upcoming Canadian foreign policy or the expected third NAP on WPS. In fact, Canadian military spending continues to trend upwards (The World Bank, 2022) and despite recent controversy surrounding an epidemic of sexual misconduct in national police and armed forces (Brewster, 2021), the government appears to be committed to ensuring more women enter and stay in these armed positions (Government of Canada, 2021).

The purpose of this analysis is not to try to determine if the government's definition of feminism is "feminist enough" or the right, or most pure form of feminism, but it is important to highlight this unavoidable tension. I position this paper in a framework of transformational feminism that does seek to transform the security sphere, to better the lives of women and girls who are involved in and impacted by conflict, but that does not insist upon disarmament or demilitarization as immediate goals, but instead meets the current system where it is.

Transformational Feminism

As mentioned above, transformational feminist thinking is not a single body of work, but instead a theoretical framework that emerges from strains of feminism all over the globe that have sought to explain and dismantle harmful gendered power structures and ideology. This includes principles of intersectionality, a term coined by law professor Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), but long understood by Black feminist organizers as a necessary lens for reading how

multiple factors of identity (race, class, sexuality, ability, etc…) can intersect to shape life experience. Intersectional feminist thinking can "draw attention to the ways that different and multiple facets of identity can inform experiences of privilege and oppression" (Lord & Tiessen 2021, p.6), including which groups are seen as capable and valued participants, and which are forgotten.

Adopting an intersectional lens helps illuminate "where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (Crenshaw in Columbia Law School, 2017) as a necessary preliminary step to changing power dynamics that disproportionately privilege white men, and oppress women, people of colour and LGBTQ+ communities. Feminist analysis demands a broad focus on the manifestation of power between and among groups, not just women, and not just state or nation-based (Thompson et al. 2021). This also means taking global power dynamics into account, in the tradition of Third World feminist critics who advocate a "transnational and cross-cultural feminist praxis, committed to combating inequalities among women while being sensitive to differences arising from cultural, social and global geopolitical locations." (Conway, 2017, p.208).

It is a delicate balance to find common ground without invisibilizing difference by making claims to the universal; a broad awareness demands a great deal of self-critical reflexivity on the part of feminists. Conway (2017) reminds us that any feminism concerned with global development must interrogate its own involvement with systems of oppression, in order to "avoid unconsciously reproducing the hegemonies and exclusions of modernist projects" (p.209). As a field, 'transnational feminism' came forth as "a particular normative analytic in feminist studies that was strongly marked by intersectionality" (Conway, 2017, p.208) in addition to being an emerging shortcut descriptor for various women's UN organizing. These intersectional

roots insist that feminists grapple with the way sex, gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, nationality, and other axes of identity inform the way issues are understood and solutions are constructed.

Transformational feminist thinking is appropriate for this analysis because of its diverse roots in intersectional and action-oriented gender justice. The language of transformation has already been regularly evoked in feminist foreign policy circles, including the ICRW's revised 2021 *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy* brief, where they insist that "a feminist foreign policy is meant to be *transformative*, collaborative and changemaking [emphasis added]" (Thompson et al., p.17). The Canadian Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group also published their recommendations "grounded in a commitment to the transformational potential of a feminist approach" urging Canada "to be brave and transformative" (2021, p.26). Transforming the status quo requires pointed action and clear policy, including commitment to a shared definition of feminism, which countries have avoided doing in their development of feminist foreign policies.

In their brief for the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) Thompson & Clement review existing feminist foreign policy documents at the time and construct a definition of feminism to propose as a starting point for other policies and further dialogue (2019, p.1) Updated in 2021 after a surge of new feminist foreign policies, their proposed definition specifically calls for policy that prioritizes gender equality by allocating "significant resources…and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence…informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements." (Thompson & Clement, 2019, p.7). This

A transformational feminist approach aligns with the ICRW's proposed definition in its insistence on systemic change through (well-funded) disruption of power structures across all

government departments. Although it has been hinted that a comprehensive articulation of Canada's full feminist foreign policy approach will eventually be released (Government of Canada, 2020, section 6, subsection 12), that has yet to be seen, and observers are quick to remind us that "[a] whole of government approach is required…This policy must extend to all sectors of international affairs, recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues" (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021, p.26).

Furthermore, research on gender mainstreaming in international development shows that despite the promise of integrating women's empowerment and gender equality into the discourse of policies and programs, the results have been disappointing (Parpart, 2014). Others have pointed out the struggles that civil society organizations report facing when given rhetorical promises but insufficient, or no, real commitments (Tiessen & Swan, 2018). For this reason, transformational feminism means going beyond just the language of transformation, to transformative feminist leadership that facilitates collective power to challenge inequalities (Brown, 2021). This would look like people of an organization working together to reshape their institution around the mission of realizing gender equality and human rights for everyone. A change like this takes focused unit-specific effort, significant resources, and buy-in, not just high-level policy language. Brown (2021) reminds us that "[f]undamentally, it all comes back to our intention – or not – to *do* things differently [*emphasis added*]" (p.33), not just use different words.

Capabilities Approach

As a second guiding theoretical framework, this research uses a capabilities approach to complement the transformational feminist lens discussed above. The capabilities approach originated in the work of Amartya Sen, who sought to challenge traditional narratives of

development to include concepts like freedom and one's ability to define their own 'good life'. In *Development as Freedom*, Sen argues that beyond economic growth, "[d]evelopment requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivation" (Sen, 1999, p.3). These 'unfreedoms' include limited access to participation in the full spectrum of community life and are often mediated by institutional arrangements that determine who can, and who cannot, positively exercise freedom (Sen, 1999, p.5).

Sen necessarily connects freedoms with social values, pointing out how what we value as a society ultimately dictates *who* gets to exercise certain freedoms, in addition to where and when. Who gets to take leadership positions, influence policy, speak publicly and represent institutions, stems from social ideas about the kind of person that is competent, experienced, viewed as a leader and expert, and ultimately valued. However, special emphasis is put on the two-way relationship between values and freedoms, especially how "values in turn are influenced by public discussions and social interactions, which are themselves influenced by participatory freedoms." (Sen, 1999, p.9). This is hopeful news for those wishing to change the status quo of a society's freedoms and values, to expand freedoms, diversify values and increase participation.

Despite its more social orientation, Sen is sure to point out that a capabilities approach is not counter to the economic goals of mainstream development theory and practise: "[t]hese substantive freedoms…are *also* very effective in contributing to economic progress" (Sen, 1999, p.5). Sen posited that expanding the possibilities for individuals to positively express their own capabilities did not need to come at the expense of other growth and development factors but is a

critical parallel goal which "allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with - and influencing - the world in which we live." (Sen, 1999, 15).

Since his seminal work in the 1990s, the capabilities approach has been taken up, and thoroughly challenged, by a variety of scholars in an ongoing academic discussion regarding the goals and methods of development, and the definition of 'a good life'. This includes philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who, in addition to Sen himself, addressed the specific importance of a capabilities approach for progressing gender equality. It is impossible to ignore that despite great growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many parts of the world "many women [...] who do not have access to public spaces, cannot freely choose in accordance with their own view of a good life or criticise the traditions and normal that keep them oppressed" (Patron, 2019, p.62). If freedoms are social products, they must be supported to flourish like other development products, in order to improve life quality and the effectiveness and appropriateness of social arrangements (Sen, 1999, p.31).

This reframe, from access to resources to capabilities, is especially important for progressing gender equality, because of the persistent compatibility of economic growth and the social subordination of women. Fellow critics of economic-focused development point out that "equality in the spaces of resources and primary goods is compatible with considerable inequalities in freedoms, because of differences in the rates at which people convert resources into freedoms" (Qizilbash, 1997, p.253). While having access to material resources can improve life quality, flooding a sexist system with money does not fully address the root problems of social inequalities and can end up being just another way to prop up systems that oppress.

Despite its promise, critics of the capabilities approach rightfully point out that those who develop their preferences under conditions of deprivation, i.e., socio economic exclusion, may be

on unequal footing to imagine and pursue their best life. For example, "[i]f one person has expensive tastes and another person restricts preferences in the face of deprivation, and the agents involved have 'equality of welfare' then, surely the egalitarian ideal has not been achieved" (Qizilbash, 1997, p.252). This 'deprivation' criticism is especially pertinent to consider in the case of women and girls globally, who under patriarchy may down-adjust their preferences to "reflect hardship and avoid bitter disappointment with the harsh realities of life; … shaped by social conditioning; or… distorted by persistent forms of exploitation and injustice" (Clark et al., 2019, p.15).

While it certainly was not Sen's idea of freedom, the reality of humans living under oppressive systems means that many people deprived of freedoms and resources will adjust accordingly, "to make as much of her life as the person who starts with better expectations" (Qizilbash, 1997, p.253). To account for this, theory should fully interrogate the way deprivation influences the capabilities of excluded groups, and practice should seek to break down limiting 'unfreedoms' and centre "the agency role of the individual as a member of the public and as a *participant* in economic, social and political actions [emphasis added]" (Sen, 1999a, p.19)

The capabilities approach emphasises the intrinsic value of participation and fits this research because of its focus on the role of the individual and prioritisation of participation. Additionally, this school of thought embraces the messiness of participation, when people "run up against institutions, values and power" which calls for "a firm grounding in the practical issues that arise from participation…the growth in the politics of 'securitization' which perceives any form of human development that challenges the existing order as 'destabilizing'" (Clark et al., 2019, p.18).

Coupled with transformational feminism, the capabilities approach is an appropriate lens for highlighting how capability, power and participation interact in the Canadian approach to the Women, Peace and Security goals. These frameworks seek to both understand the status quo and look for openings for "[n]ew and improved ways of facilitating cooperation between different actors and stakeholders…by promoting the instrumental freedoms required for effective participation" (Clark et al., 2019, p.27). By promoting systemic change for better participation, the capability approach advocates for equality of access to advantage, despite potential deprivation, without compensation of expectations for a good life.

As has been advocated for other minority groups (e.g., sexual orientation and gender identity minorities), a move from a human rights framework to a human development framework can shift the discussion from formal access to substantive capability and power (Park, 2020; Patron, 2019). In her seminal work, *On Violence*, philosopher Hannah Arendt discusses power not as the ability of an individual or group to dominate or coerce, but as a human "capacity not only to act but to act in agreement" (Arendt, 1970, p.154). This understanding emphasizes power's "potential nature as a capacity demanding actualization to effectively exist. Power is not owned or kept, like the implements of violence are." (Patron, 2019, p.57).

It is for this reason that meaningful participation is so critically important for systemic change. To truly disrupt power structures, whether they be foreign or domestic, policy-related or operational, in favour of becoming more feminist, women must be allowed to actualize their capacity, act in agreement, and act together. In a sector where strength is valued, Arendt reminds us that "[w]hile strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse" (Arendt, 1958, p.200), and undoubtedly, the same holds true for women.

In the examination of the two NAPs, it is important to keep in mind the broader system within which individual capabilities are exercised. Women's agency and empowerment are important factors, but so long as gatekeeping and barriers remain embedded in institutional systems, one's ability to thrive and exert their agency will be limited. A capabilities approach, and women's participation more generally, must also insist on structural transformation so that empowered women can actually realise their capabilities and participate equally.

1.6. Overview

I apply the aforementioned methodological and theoretical frameworks, in the second half of this paper, and analyse the discourse surrounding women's participation in the 2010-2016 and 2017-2022 Canadian NAPs on WPS. Using transformational feminist thought and the capabilities approach, I critically read the two plans to understand how the Canadian government is representing the problem, and how that representation informs proposed solutions.

Formally "Canada's National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security", the two plans outline the Government of Canada's detailed commitments to the advancement of a suite of resolutions by the United Nations pertaining to "the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security" (PeaceWomen, n.d.). Known generally as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, key provisions highlight three pillars (protection, prevention and participation) anchored "in the principle that effective incorporation of gender perspectives and women's rights can have a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of women, men, girls and boys on the ground" (PeaceWomen, n.d.). Framed as an important component of sustainable peace, the WPS seeks to engage all UN member states in reaffirming the role of women in all efforts of peace and security.

Domestically, this initiative is led by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Department of National Defence (DND), the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and supported by Public Safety Canada (PS), the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Department of Justice. Together these parties work to meet the WPS agenda objectives by contributing separate plans under a shared theory of change (Government of Canada, 2017b). Building from the first NAP covering 2010-2016, the second NAP involved consultations with civil society, namely the Women, Peace and Security Network- Canada (WPSN-C) and indicated a strong commitment to continuing external engagement to maintain an informed and ambitious line of action (GOC, 2017b, p.1-2).

Implementation plans and progress reports are published annually, with the expectation that each contributing department will monitor its own progress towards the shared goals. At the time of writing, progress reports have been published up to the 2019-2020 reporting period, presumably interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, an announcement on June 16, 2021 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated recent consultation with other implicated departments and agencies, and signalled an intention to develop a third NAP as "a priority…and…a cornerstone of our Feminist Foreign Policy" (Global Affairs Canada, 2021). In anticipation of a third NAP, it is a timely and relevant endeavour to look back at the first two NAPs, which I will undertake in the sections to follow.

2 - Analysis of Canada's National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

2.1 - Canada's National Action Plan 2010-2016: Building peace and security for all

Canada's first NAP on WPS is a fifteen-page, text-only document, divided into sections outlining its purpose, the multilateral context, an overview of Canada's approach, and then the

action plan itself with an implementation framework, objectives, actions, and indicators for four thematic areas, and notes on implementation and monitoring. A four-page annex outlines key departments for each indicator under the four thematic areas (prevention, participation and representation, protection, and relief and recovery).

Under "purpose", the suite of WPS resolutions is identified as "an important means of contributing to the full realisation of human rights…thereby building peace that respects the fundamental equality of men and women" (Government of Canada, 2010, p.1). The participation of women and girls is explicitly tied to "improved program and project effectiveness and sustainability" as a "fundamental part of effective and accountable peace operations and engagements" (GOC, 2010, p.1). These two factors, human rights and operational effectiveness, set the tone for the document and lay the groundwork in advocating for implementation that centres a right to participate as necessary for efficient security.

In outlining the multilateral context of the WPS agenda, the 2010-2016 NAP reiterates the equality of men and women throughout peace processes as "integral to the development of stable states built on a foundation of human rights" (GOC, 2010, p.1). The suite of UN resolutions are then summarised and key themes identified, including the components most relevant to this analysis: the representation and participation of women and local women's groups (Resolution 1325), increased deployment of women peacekeepers and police (Resolution 1820), and increased participation of women in post-conflict recovery and peace-making (Resolution 1889). Women's participation is presented as interrelated with women's equality and human rights, from the international, down to the community level (GOC, 2010, p.2).

Canada's approach is described as being rooted in its "core values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law" (GOC, 2010, p.3) and in line with Canada's prior

commitments and obligations under other international conventions related to women's and human rights. This strategy includes taking into account "the impact of laws, policies and programs within their surrounding social context to examine how they can provide equal benefit and *promote the active and meaningful participation* of everyone [emphasis added]" (GOC, 2010, p. 3). In orienting itself towards the empowerment of women and girls, the plan highlights the need for a new norm of purposeful inclusion and relevant decision-making authority, acknowledging that historically women have either been completely excluded from this power, or relegated to their own limited spheres.

The implementation of this Action Plan (GOC, 2010) is described as being "pursued on a variety of fronts" (p.3), "at both the policy and operational levels, nationally and internationally" (p.4), from a "cohesive whole-of-government approach" (p.4). Acting through its departmental and agency partners, and working with other UN member states, and civil society organisations, the 2010 NAP lays out four areas for change that explicitly align with indicators from the Security Council Resolutions on WPS, one of which is "advocating for the active and meaningful participation and representation of women and local women's groups in peace and security activities" (GOC, 2010, p.4). As the focus of this analysis, I will now look at how participation is discussed and represented.

Participation

As one of four main thematic areas, participation is a domain through which Canada commits to take "clear, deliberate and sustained action" (GOC, 2010, p.5) to meet UN objectives, in this case, to increase the number of women in peace operations, processes, conflict management and decision-making. Alongside three other action areas, the 2010 NAP presents six indicators (numbers 10 through 16, p.7-8) to achieve this objective. Each indicator is

described in detail in the body of the plan, and then delegated to appropriate partners in the annex (pp.13-14).

The 2010 NAP mentions "participation" 28 times: 12 times in the Annex, and 16 times in the body of the document itself. "Active and meaningful" is the most common prefix and descriptor used for participation, mentioned five times in the body text. Other descriptors such as "greater", "full", and "increased", also appear. While participation is generally linked to program and project effectiveness in the preamble of the plan, the six indicators provided go into much more detail as to how, and exactly where, women might be added, and how this improves projects.

The first three indicators are inward-facing, domestic initiatives for increasing participation and awareness of the issue within the Canadian security sphere, namely its policies and programs. Each indicator mentions the number of policies (e.g., policy directives, guiding documents, policy advice, and policy frameworks) in tandem with the number of female participants, as something to be increased. The 7 actionable sub-indicators are mostly delegated to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT), the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The project funding-related sub-indicator is delegated to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which, since 2013, was merged with DFAIT and is now collectively referred to as Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

The first indicator, divided into sub-indicators 10-1 through 10-5, focuses on encouraging women's participation in Canadian security leadership and deployments by increasing: the number of policy directives regarding women in decision-making, the number of policy directives regarding the deployment of women, the percentage of female personnel deployed to

peace operations, the percentage of personnel voluntarily deploying on peace operations related to increasing women's participation, and the proportion of female executives in departments involved in security. This indicator mentions "identifying and addressing barriers to full participation" (GOC, 2010, p.8) without further detail.

The second indicator (number 11) calls for identifying diverse Canadian experts in women, peace and security to assist, train, and advise on international deployments or multilateral assignments. The third indicator, divided into sub-indicators 12-1 and 12-2, outlines the need for women and girls' participation to be integrated into security policy frameworks and projects, both discursively and as funding priorities. Together, these three indicators highlight the need for more women and more policies that encourage women's participation, but do not give any indication to where the lack of women stems from (i.e., recruitment, retention or promotion).

The last three indicators, 13-15, are concerned with Canada's role within the larger international community and fall under a kind of outward-facing 'role model' approach. Words like 'encourage' and 'support' are used, and the focus is more on leveraging Canadian participation in international pro-women endeavours, to set a positive example, in the hopes of motivating other member states to do the same.

The fourth indicator (13-1) seeks to motivate more female troop contributions by all UN member states by encouraging training and increasing the number of Canadian interventions in UN missions that directly encourage women's participation in training and peace operations. The fifth indicator (number 14) encourages the inclusion of women and girls, and their experiences and rights, in multilateral peace and mediation processes.

The final indicator (number 15) outlines Canada's intent to support the UN in increasing the number of women in decision-making positions within the UN, by nominating Canadian

candidates, when appropriate. Together, these three indicators highlight the desire for Canada to play a stronger role in contributing to - and championing women's participation in - peace and security on the world stage. This implies that there is a role for Canada as a leader in the international arena, and that Canadian support and participation has the potential to effect change from other UN member states.

What's the problem represented to be?

Based on the indicators provided in the 2010 NAP under 'Participation and Representation', the problem of women's participation in the Canadian security sector is a combination of not enough women and not enough pro-women policy. More specifically, not enough strategic-level policy directives, not enough female personnel deployed or voluntarily selecting to deploy, not enough identified women's experts or women in executive-level roles, and not enough policy integrating women's participation into frameworks and funding disbursement schemes. The indicators call for more policy and more women domestically, and more encouragement internationally for pro-women's inclusion initiatives.

However, this representation begs the question, *why* are there not more women? If, from an inward-facing perspective, the issue is numbers, where is the lack stemming from (e.g., recruitment, retention, or promotion)? A call to simply add more women, implies that there either aren't enough women currently in the institutions involved, or that there are qualified women who aren't deploying or being promoted, for some reason(s). Both scenarios would require concentrated action at different stages (recruitment versus professional development/promotion), and without differentiating between the points from which women's participation lacks, it is difficult to effectively address the problem.

Transformational Feminism

From a transformational feminist perspective, the 2010 NAP does not sufficiently seek systemic change nor call out existing gendered power dynamics that serve as barriers to women's full and meaningful participation. The problem is represented as a numbers issue, not enough women deploying and not enough explicit policy to encourage women's participation. This suggests that if only there were more women available, or if existing women were only properly identified or encouraged more to deploy or apply, the numbers would not be so low. While the NAP does briefly mention the need to identify barriers to full participation, these are not detailed, nor framed as systemic obstacles that keep numbers low and will require more than supportive language in policy documents to remove.

As for intersectionality, the 2010 NAP does not explicitly use that language, but does mention identifying "specialists and trainers from various backgrounds" and encouraging UN peace efforts "to involve women, including Indigenous women" (GOC, 2010, p.8). It's unclear whether 'various backgrounds' refers to identity or professional/career experience, but an intersectional lens would insist on interrogating how different factors of women's identity would impact their experiences as a participant or person impacted by the security sphere. There is an acknowledgement of the differential experiences of girls and women in conflict-affected situations, but it is suggested that this is simply in comparison to men, and not alluding to the differences that exist within the category of 'women and girls'.

Capabilities Approach

While meaningful participation is identified as a main objective, a capabilities approach insists on connecting meaningful participation with the disruption of power structures that impede equal access to advantage and create compensated expectations. By this lens, adding more women to a system that maintains gendered power dynamics, and expecting them to realise

the same 'good life' under those conditions, would be an example of compensation under deprivation of meaningful freedom to act. This approach would demand a closer examination of how women's capabilities are impacted by existing 'unfreedoms', to truly understand what is holding women back from deploying, being promoted, leading, and participating in general.

What is left unaddressed/unproblematic?

In the 2010 NAP, systemic barriers to participation are not considered, instead the main concern is the number of women and pro-women policies domestically, and more international encouragement for policies regarding women's participation. Structural discrimination, in the forms of sexism, racism, or ableism, is not named, and the possibility that women are not joining, deploying, or staying in the security sphere because of these sociocultural factors is not mentioned. Left unproblematic is the issue of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces which, by 2010 had already hit the media once with a wave of women coming forward in 1998 about rape in the military (Seucharan, 2021). Without going into the nitty gritty of why women aren't joining, aren't deploying, aren't in leadership or are leaving the field altogether, it is easy to think the problem is simply a lack of numbers and/or encouragement.

2.2 - Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022 Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace

Overview

Canada's second NAP on WPS is a 26 page, full-colour pamphlet with photos, prefaced with a joint letter from involved Ministers, an Executive Summary, then divided into sections outlining the context, Canada's vision, and the new action plan. Titled "Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace", the 2017-2022 NAP is a longer, more highly produced document that centres gender in its title, and builds direct statements into section and subsection titles, e.g.,

"Women as peacemakers", "Canada's own challenges", "Gender equality as a foundation for peace", "Clear, committed, strong" and "indispensable collaboration with civil society".

In total, the document mentions gender 93 times, including on the cover in the title, whereas the first NAP mentions gender only twice, both in direct reference to UN Resolution titles or indicators (2010, p.2). Additionally, the second NAP uses the term "feminist" eighteen times, seven times in reference to policy (the 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy or broader Feminist Foreign Policy ethos) and eight times in direct reference to a feminist "approach" or "agenda". The first NAP does not contain the word "feminist", and uses "female" only three times, twice within the participation indicator 10-3 "Number and percentage of *female* Canadian Forces personnel [emphasis added]" (GOC, 2010, p. 7, 13).

In lieu of an annex, the second NAP builds its advisory structure and names its "WPS Champions" (responsible Departments and Agencies) (2017, p.15) in the body of the text, describing the annual progress reporting mechanism and outlining the involvement of civil society in the implementation oversight (2017, p.16-17). A three-page list of definitions concludes the NAP, covering sixteen relevant terms and concepts, such as: gender, gender equality, gender-mainstreaming, gender-responsive, gender transformative, multiple and intersecting discrimination, transitional justice and women and girl's empowerment (2017, p.18-20). Notably, "feminist" is not defined.

The action component, subtitled "Clear, Committed, Strong", self-describes as going "beyond its predecessor: it is a high-level guiding policy that is comprehensive, detailed and collaborative…bringing domestic and international tools to bear on the achievement of five objectives" (2017, p.10). Supporting partners are called on to implement plans that address the following five areas: increasing meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and

resolution, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and humanitarian settings, promote and protect the rights and equality of women and girls in fragile and conflict settings, and finally, strengthen the capacity of peace operations to fulfil the WPS agenda by deploying more women and embedding it into Canadian Armed Forces operations (2017, p.10).

Similar to the first NAP, the second NAP identifies Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Department of National Defence (DND), the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the RCMP as lead partners, but unlike the 2010 plan, the 2017 plan explicitly calls on lead partners to continue and strengthen their collaboration *in the field* (p.11). This lies in complement to supporting partners who are identified as mostly focusing on *domestic* policy, albeit with global importance. This explicit acknowledgement of inward/outward-facing components supports the 2017 plan's desire for partners to "work together - more than ever before - to ensure their individual efforts are not just complementary but fully leveraged to add up to more than the sum of their parts" (p.11). The goal of this holistic approach is to make progress at home and abroad, to "put Canada at the forefront of this global effort" (GOC, 2017, p.8).

The greater emphasis on collaboration asks all partners to integrate all WPS objectives into their work and compound their efforts, in contrast to the first NAP that assigned smaller, more specific, indicators to relevant partners with some, but not total, overlap. The five WPS objectives are not detailed nor broken down into actionable items, instead the 2017 NAP outlines commitments to three action areas: political leadership and diplomacy, programming, and capacity to deliver results (p.11). Each partner's implementation plan will outline specific actions to be taken, with the idea that collectively, commitments made within the three identified action areas will contribute to progress of the five broader WPS objectives. As the focus of this analysis, I will now look at how participation is discussed and represented.

Participation

While organising the objectives and action areas in this more diffuse way may support broader implementation, it also makes analysis of specific objectives, like participation, more difficult. Participation is no longer a dedicated target area, but is instead mentioned under all three action areas, and twenty times in total throughout the document. This is slightly up from sixteen mentions in the body of the 2010 NAP, and, differently, is most frequently mentioned in the section outlining the context for action (GOC, 2017, p.2-3), where the benefits of women's participation is spelled out in great detail. In setting the context, the 2017 NAP draws a direct line between women's active participation and opportunities to create "gender transformative solutions - and ultimately, more inclusive, gender equal and peaceful societies" (p.2). Notably, the 2017 NAP focuses more on the impacts of increased women's participation (e.g., social transformation, realisation of equal rights, more durable peace, mission effectiveness, access to justice, and empowerment) versus simply calling for increased numbers of women.

Under the Political leadership and diplomacy action area, there is a commitment to advocate for women's meaningful participation in peace processes, peace operations and national security sectors globally. Canada also commits to advocating for more women in leadership in the international security sphere as part of a gender-focused multilateral diplomacy strategy. (GOC, 2017, p.12). While there is a promise to integrate gender into all policies, which inevitably impacts domestic policy, this focus area is entirely outward-facing and advocacy-based, with the desire to "lead and strengthen the rules-based international order from which Canadians benefit" (GOC, 2017, p.12). It is assumed that Canadian political leaders and diplomats are, or will be, strong gender-focused representatives, but does not acknowledge gender representation within the Canadian leadership or diplomacy apparatus.

There are some hints at progress in gender representation and integration around the time of the 2017 NAP, continuing up to present day. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau famously assigned a gender equal cabinet in 2016 (Ditchburn, 2015). Four of seven signing Ministers on the 2017 NAP were women, including the first female foreign affairs Minister, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, since 1993 (McSheffrey, 2017). In 2022, at the time of expiration of the 2017 NAP, the position of Minister of Defence is held by the Honourable Anita Anand, the second woman to ever hold the position, and the first in nearly 30 years.

As for the diplomatic corps, between the Harper government in 2013 and the Trudeau government in 2017, the percentage of female-identified top Canadian diplomats rose from 29% to 44%, with greater gender representation within heads of mission as an explicit goal (Tsalikis, 2018). The increase in the representation of women in leadership and diplomacy is promising, and it is difficult to say if it is as a result of gender-aware political will, explicit numbers and percentage-based objectives from previous policies like the 2010 NAP, or other complex factors at play in the public service and elected bodies. However, the 2017 NAP does articulate an expectation of gender-sensitivity within leadership and diplomacy, regardless of the gender of the leader or diplomat responsible.

Within the section on Programming, the 2017 NAP commits to increase programming that targets women's participation and to use gender analysis on all interventions to ensure women's equal participation (p.12). This strategy complements, or perhaps mostly reiterates, the approach to grants and contributions outlined in the 2016 Feminist International Assistance Policy, and seeks to address participation indirectly through broader gender-sensitive funding qualifications and evaluations. The Peace and Stabilisation Operations Program (PSOPs) is mentioned as an avenue for increasing dedicated gender-equality programming, but no new

details or specifics for participation are given beyond "calling for more women leaders and women's organisations to be at the centre" (GOC, 2017, p.13).

This inward-facing initiative mirrors the call in the 2010 NAP for an increase (specifically in the number and percentage) of Canada-funded projects that integrate and prioritise women's participation. This task was formerly designated to CIDA and DFAIT, now collectively Global Affairs Canada, where grants and contributions for peace and security continue to be run. Overall, the programming section does not appear to add anything new, but instead reiterates commitments made in other guiding policy documents.

Finally, under Capacity to deliver results, the 2017 NAP describes an expectation of partners to build expertise and dedicate more effort to leadership to actualize gender equality goals. The plan mentions the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) analytical tool, the Canadian Armed Forces Operation HONOUR to eliminate sexual misconduct, and calls for (as an example) more women to be recruited into the Armed Forces and deployed in multilateral peace and stabilisation operations (GOC, 2017, p.13-14). In referring to capacity, the 2017 NAP seems to be alluding to systemic barriers that interfere with the ability of Departments and Agencies to deliver results on gender equality initiatives. For example, analysing the way programs and policies differentially impact different groups of people (the purpose of GBA+) and eliminating sexual misconduct within the ranks of the CAF to retain female members who might leave if victimized.

Unlike the 2010 NAP, the 2017 NAP states the domestic/international interplay, and the intention to be a global role model explicitly: "supporting women's participation in Canada's own institutions is key to delivering on the WPS agenda, both because this enables more women to deploy internationally, and *because we should lead by example* [emphasis added]" (p.14).

Also unlike its predecessor, the 2017 NAP acknowledges the role of harassment and discrimination within the CAF as a barrier to women's full participation as members of the domestic security sector. This follows the 2015 release of the Deschamps report which concluded that there is an underlying sexualized culture in the Canadian military that harms women and LGBTQ members, and the "integrity, professionalism and efficiency of the CAF as a whole" (Deschamps, 2015, p.i).

To address the issue, the 2017 NAP commits to supporting women by promoting a culture of leadership and fully implementing all of the recommendations from the Deschamps report to "strive to eliminate harmful behaviour" (GOC, p.14). Eluding to the restrictive nature of systemic discrimination, the plan points out that "When women have the opportunity to share their talents and expertise without a 'glass ceiling', everyone benefits" (GOC, 2017, p.14). In this way, women's ability to excel is connected to larger operational success to the benefit of everyone involved, not just women.

Also under Capacity to deliver results, the 2017 NAP mentions strengthening pre-deployment training for CAF and RCMP members on the principles of the WPS agenda, of which participation is a major component. In its conclusion, the plan reiterates its comprehensive nature in supporting women's "full participation in peace and security efforts" as "the rights of women and girls cannot be compromised. Canada will lead." (GOC, 2017, p.17).

What's the Problem Represented to Be?

Based on the restructuring of objectives and the inclusion of participation under all three major action areas, the problem of women's participation in the Canadian security sector, according to the 2017 NAP, is a matter of inadequate gender mainstreaming. From its own glossary, the 2017 NAP describes gender mainstreaming as "ensuring that gender perspectives

and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities…in all phases" (GOC, p.18). This plan seeks to have all partners integrate the awareness and advocacy of women's participation into all aspects of operation, from programming to leadership. This 'saturation' approach goes beyond the 2010 NAP's 'add women (and policy) and stir' recommendations, in its delegation of gender integration to all departments and agencies, in all aspects of operation, from the top down.

From this approach, it is possible to deduce that women's participation is seen not just as a numbers issue, but as an issue of thorough engagement at the individual, collective and systemic levels. By asking all partners to make women's participation a priority in their leadership, programming and capacity goals, the 2017 NAP implies that if the principles and ideology of gender equality are embedded in all levels of governmental structures, women's meaningful participation will increase. By this logic, the lack of women's meaningful participation is not due to a lack of female employees or an absence of high-level guiding policy, but a failure to address barriers embedded within the many levels of the governmental system itself. If only everyone were gender-aware, they would work to facilitate women's meaningful participation in their own work environment.

While this representation of the problem acknowledges the need for systemic change and assigns the work to all departments and levels, it does not fully detail the kind and extent of the barriers that exist. Without details and specifics of how systemic culture change is to happen within organisations built on longstanding behavioural norms and power-laden hierarchical structures, it is hard to imagine how any change will happen on its own. Culture change is difficult, and targeted interventions are required to change the substantive status quo of any

institution, because it is very possible for ‘business as usual’ to continue operating despite introducing new high-level policy guidance.

The 2017 NAP offers gender mainstreaming as the solution to lack of women’s participation in the peace and security sector, which presumes that by putting gender everywhere, barriers to participation will be lowered. I will now examine this representation and interrogate what is left unproblematic/unaddressed in this solution.

Transformational Feminism

From a transformational feminist perspective, the 2017 NAP does a better job at recognizing the need for systemic change than the 2010 NAP. In fact, the term “transformative change” is used four separate times and included in the glossary, defined as going “beyond gender responsiveness” to “specifically aim at transforming unequal gender relations to promote shared power” (GOC, 2017, p.19). This understanding goes beyond numbers and starts to get to the root of where inequality and barriers to participation come from and are maintained: the norms and culture of an organisation. However, transformation takes more than encouragement.

While the 2017 NAP is full of promising rhetoric, it is slim on details and substantive incentive to implement the kind of widespread systemic change that it calls for. Additionally, the connection between gender mainstreaming and increased meaningful participation is not clearly spelled out, and it is assumed that with awareness, everyone will transform themselves into effective women’s advocates. A transformational feminist approach would warn against assuming that deeply embedded beliefs and behavioural norms regarding women’s presence, leadership and access to decision-making power won’t be met with resistance and backlash. An awareness of the potential for hostility towards gender equality-oriented change is especially

pertinent within institutions like the Armed Forces, and defence sector generally, that have long histories of rigid hierarchical structures and masculinized work environments.

The proposed version of gender mainstreaming follows a liberal conception by targeting women's participation and stressing equality under law (Tiessen, 2007, p.15), which ultimately seeks to welcome more women into existing structures and assumes their presence will result in change towards gender equality. If only women are invited to the table, liberal gender mainstreaming believes organisational systems will benefit but also respond in kind by eventually trending towards gender equality. However, a truly transformative agenda would *start* by naming and confronting gender bias where it exists in organisational culture and policy, instead of a more neoliberal feminist approach that downloads the responsibility of change to individual empowerment, and frames participation as operational efficiency and smart economics (Parisi, 2020, p.164).

This representation of participation raises interesting questions regarding responsibility and incentive. Is this approach leaving the true transformational work up to women, once they've been allowed to meaningfully participate within a system? Are the proposed benefits to everyone enough to overcome deeply embedded sexist norms and beliefs? A thorough understanding of how individuals and institutions change is imperative, to ensure the burden is not being placed disproportionately on women's shoulders, and that they aren't just being added to sexist spaces, expected to thrive and drive the expected changes.

Capabilities Approach

While meaningful participation is again identified as a main objective, like the 2010 NAP, the 2017 NAP goes further and connects meaningful participation with the disruption of power structures that impede women and girl's equal access to leadership and resources.

Through a capabilities approach lens, it is critical to examine the ‘unfreedoms’ that exist structurally to limit the ability of women to actualize their individual capabilities and realise a ‘good life’. The 2017 NAP does acknowledge these kinds of limiting structural barriers: harmful social norms, sexual and gender-based violence, exclusion from peace processes, lack of economic security, lack of access to justice post-conflict, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The plan even recognizes the ‘at-home’ issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls, despite Canada not being a fragile nor conflict-affected state itself.

Similar to Amartya Sen’s conception of a capabilities approach, the 2017 NAP names gender equality as a critical social value that also happens to pair well with economic development, in fact, the plan places the WPS agenda “at the intersection” of “preventing and responding to conflicts to help build a more peaceful *and prosperous* world [emphasis added]” (GOC, p.1). The peace/prosperity pairing reveals the ideological move to bring women’s empowerment into traditional capitalist growth. This desire mirrors the ethos of the same government’s earlier Feminist International Assistance Policy, which has been described as embodying both *feminist neoliberalism*, “promot[ing] gender equality as necessary and good for economic growth” and *neoliberal feminism*, “promot[ing] market citizenship as the primary path to achieving gender equality” (Parisi, 2020, p.164). In this vein, gender equality means increased women’s participation in global markets, which is good for world business, with the bonus effects of peace and the full realisation of human rights.

Therefore, this flavour of integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming (Tiessen, 2007) aims to, first and foremost, eliminate the unfreedoms that keep women from being productive within existing structures and practices. This ultimately limits the transformative feminist potential of the agenda as a whole, and the capabilities of individuals to express agency

and thrive within institutional structures that adopt these kinds of changes. While the 2017 NAP talks about transformative change, the solutions suggest this will look like opening more doors to the existing house, versus dismantling and rebuilding it.

What is left unproblematic?

In prioritising thorough integrationist gender mainstreaming, the 2017 NAP acknowledges certain systemic aspects that the 2010 ignored, but ultimately does not go far enough to name and tackle the most insidious norms and beliefs. The desire to saturate department and agency policy with pro-gender rhetoric is admirable, but without targeted approaches to culture change, a top-down strategy is unlikely to have the deep transformative effect that the plan is aiming for.

As has been observed with gender mainstreaming in development projects, sometimes when gender is everywhere, it can end up being nowhere; by this, researchers mean that when the responsibility for gender-sensitive change is dispersed to everyone in an organisation, it can be "decentralised to the point of disappearing completely" (Tiessen, 2007, p.17). While important progress has been made in policy and representation within the Canadian government, feminist scholars remind us that "ongoing constraints from masculinist organizational cultures as well as resistance and pervasive attitudes towards women and gender mainstreaming must also be considered" (Tiessen, 2007, p.12). It cannot be assumed that gender-sensitive attitudes will be readily taken up and implemented, or even that the barriers to women's meaningful participation are obvious to all of the individuals that make up the departments and agencies of concern.

The issue of sexual misconduct and the Deschamps report are briefly mentioned, but the NAP does not speak to the way gendered power dynamics can shape behavioural norms in all work environments, in harmful ways that don't always reach the point of qualifying as official

misconduct or sexual assault. Even so, as of 2022 the CAF has failed to fully implement the 2015 Deschamps report, Operation HONOUR was ended under questionable effectiveness, and in April 2021, another external review (the second in six years) into the Armed Forces was launched under former supreme court justice, Louise Arbour (Brewster, 2021).

In taking a high-level approach, it appears that the 2017 NAP failed to fully realise the urgency and importance of the daily, on the ground, unit-level reality for women within the Canadian security sector. If institutional culture does indeed mean that government staff 'eat policy for breakfast', the combined 155,850 members and employees of the 2017 NAP leader partners (Treasury Board, 2022) deserve more than just another feminist plan or policy that will inevitably succumb to anti-feminist culture. It is not enough to open more doors, unless the 'unfreedoms' that exist inside the house are confronted and resolved.

3 - Discussion

This analysis is based on three research questions, as stated in the introduction: how do the NAPs present the challenges of – and solutions to - women's participation in peace and security, what are the gaps and missed opportunities in the way challenges and solutions are presented, and how can we understand these priorities and gaps through a transformational feminist lens and using a capabilities approach? In this section I will compare and discuss the findings from the discourse analysis of each NAP with regards to my original research questions, after briefly comparing the political contexts between 2010, 2017 and today, to set the stage for further analysis. As mentioned above, each NAP was released by a different Canadian government (Conservative versus Liberal), with the third plan expected to come under the current Liberal leadership, in conjunction with a white paper on their articulation of a full feminist foreign policy. Knowing this, it is possible to track the trajectory of representation thus

far, under successive governments, and consider likely scenarios for the language and commitments in the third NAP on WPS.

3.1 Comparing Contexts

The 2010 NAP on WPS was released under the Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, during a noted period of discursive erasure, where the language of gender equality was "effectively edited out of official Canadian foreign policy" (Tiessen & Carrier, 2015, p.95) in favour of "equality between men and women", "violence against women" and even "mothers" instead of "women". These linguistic changes were significant because they marked a move away from Canada's "robust rhetorical tradition of promoting *gender equality* at home and abroad [emphasis added]" (Tiessen & Carrier, 2015, p.95). The word "gender" appears only twice in the 2010 NAP, both times in reference to specific UN Resolution titles and objectives, whereas the word "woman" appears 165 times in fifteen pages.

The discursive shift away from gender was not just a matter of vocabulary, as it was found to have had impacts on development programming, funding decisions, and ultimately the Canadian reputation as a global leader on gender equality, formerly rooted in a state identity as a "good state" (Richey, 2001; Tiessen & Carrier, 2015). The 2010 NAP reflects the tension between an obligation to the UN to act on the WPS agenda and a desire to 'degender' Canadian foreign policy. With regards to development programming of the same era, this linguistic shift was seen as a major threat to effectiveness "because of its focus on low-capacity-building, bean-counting projects" (Tiessen & Carrier, 2015, p.108). This approach also shows up in the 2010 NAP with its emphasis on increasing numbers and percentages of women, an easily quantifiable strategy that aligns with the social values of the Canadian leadership of the time.

Alternatively, the 2017 NAP was a product of a Liberal government, elected to power in 2015 under the leadership of Justin Trudeau after nine years of Harper Conservatives. Despite an immediate rhetorical shift towards feminism, foreign policy observers were careful to remind us that "[e]lecting a government with a different vision and social base is a necessary but not a sufficient part of a strategy to renew policy and practice" (Baranyi & Tiessen, 2017, p.289). Within the first years of the Trudeau government, there were strong signs of a recommitment to gender equality and reengagement with civil society and NGOs, with a desire to step back into the global spotlight as a leader on these issues. From this big feminist pivot we see the release of the 2017 NAP that self-identifies as more ambitious than its predecessor and 're-genders' itself by putting its values front and centre. The second NAP mentions gender 92 times, up from two mentions in the first NAP.

However, the newly embraced feminist identity did not come without scrutiny and backlash, both from those who thought the 'f-word' was going too far, and those who thought it didn't go far enough. In particular, since its release, the 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy has been the object of intense analysis to determine what kind of feminism it represents and if it is "feminist enough". Parisi (2020) interrogates whether or not the FIAP is 'business as usual', concluding that despite a desire to use feminism to elevate policy from integrationist to transformational, the policy is self-limiting in its fixation on "the business case for feminism" (p.175) as smart economics. The rhetoric out-aspires the actionables, in terms of systemic transformation.

The 2017 NAP is a product of this bold lunge into more explicitly progressive politics, but without the benefit of time, governing experience, or a roadmap to fully develop a whole-of-government feminist strategy. It is from this context that we can read the second NAP as

deliberate expansion from the first, but practically, still a stretch given the scope and newness. At the time of writing, the Trudeau Liberal government is still in power, and is expected to author the third NAP, only now with seven years experience and a first attempt to build from. Given this context, I will now transition into comparing my analysis of how participation is represented, and what is left unaddressed in each plan.

3.2 Representations of Participation

The 2010 NAP represents the problem of women's low participation as a numbers and policy issue, therefore the solution is to delegate quotas for women and women-inclusive policies to the respective departments and agencies. This representation assumes that with encouragement and explicit policy (e.g., being mandated to increase the number of women deployed in peace operations, having more guiding documents that encourage women in decision making) the number and percentage will increase. Built into this logic is the assumption that there is already a pool of willing and qualified women who, given sufficient encouragement, will apply, deploy and meaningfully participate. This simple representation of the issue, as just a matter of numbers to be upped, falls in line with the preferred 'bean-counting' approach of the government of 2010. The environment in which women are being encouraged to participate more, is not considered.

The 2017 NAP represents the problem of women's low participation as a matter of inadequate gender mainstreaming, therefore the solution is to saturate the relevant departments and agencies with gender-equality programming, policies and advocacy in all phases of their work. This representation assumes that everyone has a role to play in achieving gender equality, and that with high-level policy guidance, all departments and agencies will willingly and effectively make women's participation a leadership, programming and capacity priority. Built

into this logic is the assumption that the knowledge, motivation and reception for the necessary widespread culture change currently exists at all levels of the departments and agencies involved.

While some systemic barriers are acknowledged in the 2017 NAP, there is a gross underestimation of the pointed effort and buy-in required for such an overhaul of longstanding behavioural norms and beliefs. This ideology-first approach to the issue, naming values and entrusting specific action to partners, falls in line with the quick progressive pivot of the government of 2017. The talking points are clear and ambitious, but the details are lacking.

3.3 Transformational Feminist Components

The 2010 NAP proposes an 'add women (and policy) and stir' approach, which does not mention or aspire to systemic change. The goal is to have more women participate in the existing system, without considering how the status quo might be hostile and exclusionary to women already on the inside. The lack of transformational goals is not surprising from the government of the time, who was actively 'de-gendering' foreign policy, in favour of the traditional binary language of men and women. Nuanced or intersectional understandings of gendered lived experience was not of concern, therefore, identifying systemic bias and changing the status quo was not proposed.

On the other hand, the 2017 NAP fully embraces the language of transformation, identifies some of the systemic barriers, and advocates for whole-of-government change towards gender equality, in order for empowered women to participate everywhere fully and meaningfully. However, some of the most challenging barriers to systemic transformation (e.g., persistent sexualized workplace culture, lack of women in senior leadership) are only addressed briefly, then left up to the very same hierarchical institutions that have been maintaining this status quo, to get on board with the new top-down feminist agenda and change themselves. A

transformational lens would demand a more detailed exploration of where power comes from and collides (*Crenshaw in* Columbia Law, 2017), to understand how the norms that exclude and harm women have been propped up and maintained this whole time.

Rhetorically, the 2017 NAP seeks transformation, but without detailed and tailored strategies to address the most challenging and insidious systemic obstructions that face women, it is possible for the operational status quo to persist, despite being under a new feminist banner at the top levels.

3.4 Capabilities - Agency versus Structure

The 2010 NAP uses the language of meaningful participation but does not make a connection to the disruption of existing power structures or 'unfreedoms' that impede equal access to the full realisation of one's capabilities within an organisation. In terms of agency and structure, the 2010 NAP does say that it orients itself towards "empowering women and girls by creating and reinforcing systems and structures that enable equality between men and women" (GOC, p.3), but through its named objectives, seems to rely mostly on adding women as its empowerment strategy. Besides increasing the number and percentage of women, and advocating for more pro-women policies, the 2010 NAP does not concern itself with changing the norms, beliefs, or culture of the system as it stands.

The 2017 NAP does go further than its predecessor in connecting freedoms with social values, and acknowledges the need for systemic change to remove unfreedoms that restrict women's effective participation. The plan even names some of the challenges that Canada faces and puts its gender-focused values front and centre, but more than rhetoric is needed in order to allow those values to translate into true participatory freedoms. Through a capabilities lens, increasing women's participation in the peace and security sector should necessarily be

approached from the dual lenses of access and value: this means having women hold power and influence policy, making your gender-equal values explicit, but also acting firmly and swiftly to respond to and prevent harms that happen to women who do participate.

3.5 What is left unaddressed and unproblematic?

As mentioned above, while the 2017 NAP tries to stimulate systemic change through values-forward rhetoric, neither NAP attempts to get to the very root of the barriers to women's participation. With its suggested solution of "add more women", the 2010 NAP should have asked "why aren't there more women?", to find out what was happening at the unit-level, in the field, and within recruitment and promotion practices. The culture, norms, and beliefs were left unaddressed. And while the Liberal government did problematize systemic barriers in the second NAP, the strength and depth of those norms was left unaddressed. With its suggested solution of more thorough gender mainstreaming, the 2017 NAP should have gone further to ask: what incentive will it take to change the culture, at all levels?

In the first media wave of this issue, a 1998 MacLean's story "Rape in the Military", female members describe a culture "of unbridled promiscuity, where harassment is common, heavy drinking is a way of life, and women…are often little more than a game for sexual predators" (O'Hara, 1998, para. 3). Seventeen years later, after a second media wave, the 2015 Deschamps report clearly found "an underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and LGTBQ members, and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault" (p.i). However, in April 2021 testimony before the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, female members of the CAF are *still* asking "What about my back? I'm one of you too. I am a member of this military too. Why don't you have my back?" (Seucharan, 2021).

The culture of the peace and security sector is at the crux of the issue of women's meaningful participation, and until that is meaningfully addressed, policy will continue to have limited transformative power. Again, feminist researchers remind us that "ongoing constraints from masculinist organizational cultures as well as resistance and pervasive attitudes towards women and gender mainstreaming must also be considered" (Tiessen, 2007, p.12). Defence is one example of a longstanding, hierarchical, masculinist organisational culture. Therefore, constraints and resistance should be anticipated and strategically confronted.

Furthermore, the victims of a sexualized and masculinized defence culture are not limited to women, and further inquiry and action would benefit from remembering that "gendering research means adding more than women" (Eichler, 2017, p.5). This must include a serious consideration of the way male and LGBTQ+ members can be negatively influenced by sexist norms, and the importance of broad allyship moving forward.

4 - Conclusion

In conclusion, the 2010 and 2017 Canadian National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security represent the issue of women's participation in the security sector in different ways, with different proposed solutions that reflect the values and style of decision-making of the governments of their time. Through a critical reading of each plan, it is possible to see what is left unproblematic or unaddressed by policymakers, and in both cases, the power of institutional norms that have historically excluded and dissuaded women are not clearly named and strategized against. Beyond adding women and pro-women policy, or embracing high-level feminist rhetoric, the deep-seated, environmental-specific behavioural patterns of each unit needs to be confronted in partnership with buy-in from team members themselves.

Further research should consider principles of effective change management from a transformational feminist perspective, and when the third National Action Plan is released, observers would be justified in looking for more specific approaches to culture change. While the defence sector is not unique in its struggle to address systemic gender inequality, its specific barriers are unique and deserve targeted change processes that respect the nature of the work and acknowledge the desperate need for modernization towards gender equality. In the words of Marie Deschamps, "[t]he Canadian public expects it, and [...] members deserve it." (2015, p.viii).

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