FEMINIST SECURITY

CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENT

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SUMMARY

As classically conceived, security is the defence and protection by military and police of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and public order against both external and internal threats. Under this paradigm, a state must pursue its own security by strengthening its political and military dominance. A re-examination of this state defence-based perspective began to take place from the 1960s onwards. In 1994 the United Nations Development Programme/ UNDP's Human Development Report presented a new, more integrated concept of *human security*, which equated security more with people and communities rather than territories, and specifically addressed the complexity of the issue in terms of the interrelated economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political dimensions of human security. By drawing attention to the fact that gender is actually a structural element that underlies all power relationships, feminism has brought to the foreground an essential point that takes this process one step further. The disregard for gender as the focus of analysis will limit attempts to deal with violence in any form.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also shown the need to rethink the meaning of security. The virus has revealed humanity's fragility in the face of a health crisis, which only adds to the growing awareness of vulnerability to global ecological, social and economic crises. One manifestation of this crises is chronic (and ever-increasing) violence in many countries. Latin America in particular has the highest levels of violence in the world despite there being hardly any armed conflicts in the entire continent. The institutional response to this situation continues to be measures that are typically reactive and punitive and focus on the extension of policing and the reaffirmation of imprisonment as an end in itself.

In this context, the ICIP has started a new a line of action titled *Security Alternatives*, the aim of which is to contribute to both the conceptual debate and, in particular, the adoption of practical measures. We believe a feminist lense to the security challenges provides a clearer perspective on how to address them.

This paper, which has been produced by the Escola de Cultura de Pau, offers insight into the developments in and main contributions of feminist security studies. Based on a bibliographical review, reference is made to numerous publications that are of particular importance to the gender, peace and security agenda.

The document identifies the predominance of references from English-speaking countries in the academic bibliography on feminist security. There is a need to better identify, acknowledge, describe and disseminate the multiple practical experiencies and conceptual discussions occuring in different contexts of chronic violence. In this regard, we believe it is important to strive for better articulation of human rights violations, peacebuilding approaches and alternative approaches to security.

International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP)

1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries of the world face a situation of multi-dimensional and persistent violence, which calls for new approaches and analyses that go beyond the traditional frameworks that have been ineffective in addressing the complexity of the phenomenon. In recent decades, and partly in response to the shortcomings of hegemonic analysis, feminist security studies have made contributions of enormous value that have greatly enhanced critical reflection on violence, peace and security. The purpose of this paper is to bring together several of these contributions, paying particular attention to the context in Latin America. It first reviews the contributions made to security studies from the perspective of feminism. Attention is then drawn to the conceptualisation of feminicide as a focus of analysis that provides numerous useful insights into the gender, peace and security agenda. It then goes on to deal with security sector reform, an area of particular importance to both feminist security studies and the context in Latin America.

In recent decades, academic feminism and feminist activism have advocated a reinterpretation of the idea of security that is relevant to the lives and needs of women as well as the population with non-normative gender identities. Although, in hegemonic terms, the notion of security has been closely linked to state security, there has been a shift toward a greater focus on human security. **The feminist reinterpretation of security identifies the ways that gender norms and inequalities underpin connections in insecurities across public and private spaces** (Swaine 2019, p. 765). As Ann Tickner has pointed out, women's definitions of security are multi-level and multi-dimensional and they identify security as the absence of violence, whether military, economic or sexual. Feminist theory sees all these types of violence as being interrelated (Tickner 1992).

This feminist reinterpretation of security has developed in particular in the academic world under the umbrella term of feminist international relations. Following the incorporation of the feminist perspective in feminist international relations from the eighties and nineties onwards, with the end of realist hegemony (Zalewski 2018) and the questioning of the androcentric and patriarchal perspective of international politics, the issue of security has been an important subject for debate and research. The term "feminist security studies" was not coined until the mid-2000s and is still in a process of constant evolution (Sjoberg 2017), making it a recent area of study that is in the process of consolidation and constant evolution. This feminist approach fundamentally seeks to understand "how gender identity and gender politics shape experiences of security and insecurity" (Lee-Koo 2012).

Although feminist approaches to security have parallels and intersect with other critical views of security studies, such as the human security approach, they also point to the limitations of the very idea of human security if it does not include or take into account the gender dynamics that occur in any society and are assumed to be universal and therefore masculine (Swaine 2019, 768). Laura Sjoberg (2017, 2018) outlines a series of tenets common to those working in the field of feminist security studies:

1) A broad understanding of what counts as a security issue, and to whom the concept of security should be applied. Feminism has argued that threats to the security of women originate from many sources, ranging from international to domestic violence. An extensive look at what constitutes a threat to security enables broader ways of dealing with such threats to be defined.

2) The recognition and understanding of the gendered nature of the values "prized in the realm of security".

3) The recognition of the broad and diverse role that gender plays in the theory and practice of international security.

4) The omission of gender from work on security does not make that work gender-neutral or unproblematic and its inclusion is based not on gender being a variable for analysis or approach, but on the transformation of security studies themselves.

The "feminist security studies"[1] label is in itself ambiguous because it can be interpreted either as an adjective that aims at the mainstreaming of feminism and its methodological and practical tools in security studies or as the analysis of "feminist security", a concept about which there is no clear consensus (Cohn 2011). In spite of the difficulties in defining feminist security, Cohn points out that it is always and inevitably relational and based in interdependence, and cannot come from some kind of fantasized, isolated, completely autonomous and self-sufficient, armed independence. In this context, Cohn emphasises the **importance of the idea of vulnerability in security discourses and practices** and poses the question: what kind of national security policy would be recognised as rational if we acknowledged that vulnerability is inevitable, that control has limits, and that ultimately decline is unavoidable? (Cohn 2014).

As for the issues dealt with by feminist security studies, Tickner (2011, 578) points out that feminists have in general focused their research on what happens to people during civil and military conflicts and how these conflicts affect their lives; they have analysed the different meanings of "(in)security", the links between militarisation, masculinity and military institutions, and they have suggested that the way in which national security policies are framed, together with the type of language used, contributes to the legitimisation or delegitimisation of specific policies. Stern points out that there is scholarship in **feminist security studies that "asks questions about violence in all its myriad forms and that interrogates the "continuum of violence";[2] that takes as its point of departure the 'everyday'**

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1. The term "feminist security studies" can be translated in different ways into Spanish, including "estudios feministas sobre seguridad", "estudios feministas de seguridad" and "estudios sobre seguridad feminista", each one having a different connotation. There is currently no definition that is generally accepted by the academic community.

2. The idea of the continuum of violence has been used by different feminist authors to refer to the inter-relationship of different forms of violence experienced by women and to highlight how acts of violence in the public sphere and in contexts of armed conflict are related to acts of violence that take place on a daily basis in the private sphere.

(...)" (Stern 2017, 731). The scope of analysis of feminist security studies ranges from the impact of armed conflict on gender relations, forced displacement and sexual violence to militarisation and its links with the social construct of hegemonic masculinity, to the everyday experience of insecurity as a consequence of the global dynamics of inequality and exclusion in an international context of neoliberal expansion and neo-colonial and extractive political and economic projects.

Early research in feminist security studies placed a major emphasis on the links between political economy and security although the inter-disciplinary alliance between feminist security studies and feminist political economy subsequently weakened (Sjoberg 2017, 155). Nevertheless, numerous authors advocate better use of analyses shared by both perspectives given **the close connection between the current global economic order and gender insecurity**, as is clearly evident in the regional context of Latin America. In its discussions on feminist human security, for example, the "Strategic Dialogue on Women and Security: Peacebuilding in the Americas" addressed issues including the role of the US government and corporations in aspects such as militarisation and land grabbing. Discussions on feminist security that fail to pay due attention to the economic dimension also risk using the same parameters as hegemony studies of security issues given that the analytical perspective of feminist security studies has been greatly enhanced by the dynamics of political economy. Laura Sjoberg highlights issues as diverse as military prostitution and everyday insecurity as examples of the importance of this (Sjoberg 2017, 156).

At the same time, the international expansion of the women, peace and security agenda has been taking place in parallel with this developing area of analysis, following the approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions. Nevertheless, authors like Swaine (2019, 769) maintain that not only has the framework provided by the women, peace and security agenda failed to change the traditional approach to security, but that instrumental use is made of women's rights and a comprehensive approach to security from a gender perspective has still not been achieved. As a result, part of the transformative character with which the agenda was initially developed by civil society has fallen by the wayside. **The women, peace and security agenda essentially refers to conflict and post-conflict situations, but it does not address the insecurity engendered by women in contexts of violence not considered to be armed conflicts according to classic conceptions**. Numerous situations of severe insecurity for women therefore fall outside of its scope, which is of particular importance in the context of Latin America.

The growth of feminist security studies is taking place in what is clearly an English-speaking academic context, which has endowed the discipline with certain characteristics as well as certain limitations. Various authors have questioned who gets to be part of the conversa-

tion in the context of feminist security studies and whose contestations are legitimate challenges to dominant narratives (Shepherd 2013). Various authors have also drawn attention to the fact that contributions from places other than the United States have been ignored (Parashar 2013, 441). For example, within the framework of implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, countries of the Global South have been considered as mere recipients of WPS norms and are perceived as being in a "perpetual" state of insecurity and conflict (Parashar 2019), whereas countries of the Global North tend to develop policies that support the WPS agenda abroad, but not as part of their own internal politics.

The consideration of feminist security studies in the context of Latin America takes on particular importance, given the serious security threats facing the population on a daily basis. Aspects such as feminicide, the impact of drug trafficking, the situation of human rights activists, threats to the environment and human trafficking are but a few examples of how insecurity manifests in the region, with dire consequences from a gender perspective.

Latin American activitsts and academics have made a specific contribution to feminist security studies in describing and challenging feminicide. This perspective ties in with current challenges, approaches and dilemmas facing feminist security studies and the gender, peace and security agenda. These include the gender, peace and security agenda as a human rights agenda; intersectionality; interactions between violence and the economy; the long-term legacies of civil wars; and the patriarchal culture of war, among others.

While the use of violence against women and girls as a 'weapon of war' has received widespread international attention, researchers have only recently begun to assess its prevalence in peacetime and transitioning societies (Small Arms Survey 2014, 9). As a type of gender-based violence, feminicide is a critical feminist security issue worldwide and specifically in Latin America. Feminicide constitutes a conceptual tool not only for anti-violence advocacy, but also to further a feminist analytics on gender-based violence. In addition, it has been used by numerous actors to highlight certain types of violence against women and girls, especially in the context of so-called "peacetime" (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 7).

The concept of feminicide has developed and evolved since it was first introduced to academia by Latin American authors like Lagarde in the eighties, which built on the earlier work of Russell and Radford on *femicide* (the murder of women and girls because of their gender) (Lagarde 2006). Not all Latin American authors are in agreement however regarding the use of the terms "femicide" and "feminicide". Fregoso and Bejarano define it as:

"the murders of women and girls founded on a gender power structure. Second, feminicide is gender-based violence that is both public and private, implicating both the state (directly or indirectly) and individual perpetrators (private or state actors); it thus encompasses systematic, widespread, and everyday interpersonal violence. Third, feminicide is systematic violence rooted in social, political, economic and cultural inequalities." (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 5).

Lagarde, Fregoso and Bejarano and other authors have addressed the issue of feminicide in a human rights context. Analytical efforts and activism within this framework have been reflected in the field of international law, for example, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which in 2009 found Mexico in violation of human rights conventions for its failure to prevent and investigate the murders of various victims of feminicide (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 6). Addressing feminist security in terms of women's human rights provides major aspects for analysis and action, not just in terms of the issue of feminicide, but also the range of numerous forms of violence and persecution that women face in Latin America, in particular women human rights defenders (land defenders, lesbian feminists, female journalists, amongst many others). In this regard, the incorporation of an intersectional approach is important as this offers a key element for establishing a framework for analysis and action that covers violence and discrimination in their entirety and focuses on the links between gender, class, race, migratory status and age, among other things (Berlanga Gayón 2015).

Approaches to feminicide have also focused on the relationship between violence and economic inequality, or between feminicide and neo-liberalism (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010; Olivera and Furio 2006; Sagot Rodríguez 2017; Valencia 2010; Segato 2014), in interaction with other structures and inequalities. In light of the divisions between feminist security studies in the English-speaking world and global feminist politics, the field of study in Latin America help to refocus interactions between violence, local context and global economy on feminist security. Contributions have shown how **devastating, neo-liberalist-driven structural changes – economic, political, and social – have precipitated extreme forms of violence in the region** (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). Aspects such as geopolitical localisation (Valencia 2011 in Herrera 2017) and the "capitalisation of borders" (Benítez Eyzaguirre 2014 in Herrera 2017), together with "the devaluation of poor women at the border" (Monárrez Fragoso 2013) are intertwined with violence against women. In particular and as an example, civil society actors in Mexico established a connection between violence against women in places like Ciudad Juárez and the political economy of export processing zones on the northern Mexican border (Wright 2011). Again in relation to Mexico, Olivera identifies poverty, unemployment, disintegration of the peasant (family-type small farming) economy and migration – all the more acute since the Salinas government (1988-1994) accelerated neoliberal policies – together with the national governability crisis, as being the most important structural causes for the increase in violence against women (Olivera and Furio 2006, 107).

Several non-feminist studies on urban violence have conceptualised gang violence as being ultimately embedded in a wider crisis of exclusion and spatial segregation, with elements of social discrimination, a progressive breakdown of social cohesion, and fragmentation of the public space, among other things (Jütersonke, Muggah and Rodgers 2009). This multi-fractured dimension also appears in analyses of feminicide. Sagot Rodríguez refers to De Sousa Santos and his remarks about neoliberalism being a generator of economic inequality that divides cities into "civilized zones" with more and more gated communities and "savage zones" affected by exploitation, unemployment/unemployment and violence (Sagot Rodríguez 2017). The links between feminicide and neoliberalism have in turn led authors on feminicide to use Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics" and analyse how necropolitics is fuelled by capitalism – Valencia uses the concept of *gore capitalism* (2011) – and the relationship between capital and death (Segato 2013).

Another significant factor regarding feminist security in the region that stands out in analyses of feminicide is the pervasive spectre of civil war and Latin America's so-called "dirty wars" of Latin America. According to various authors, feminicidal violence is linked to practices of extreme violence and militarisation of daily life by military regimes, which have taken gender-specific forms. The long-term structural and psychic impacts of military rule and civil wars have persisted in the conduct of military and ex-military personnel (Hollander 1996 in Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). Forms of arbitrary and random violence developed during the dirty wars are embedded in the present-day security apparatus (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). Fregoso and Bejarano also refer to Domínguez-Ruvalcaba in pointing out that it is precisely the relationship between machismo and violence and the mutually constituting forces of militarized, misogynist institutions, emphatic masculinism and random, arbitrary violence that have helped to fuel contemporary expressions of feminicide (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 14).

The normalisation of violence, together with the limitations of the peace agreements and the impunity that accompanied the "transitions to democracy" in the region, as well as access to weapons, have also been identified as factors that currently influence feminicide. The most important factors in the case of El Salvador are the impunity (amnesty) laws, which were deemed unconstitutional in 2016; the lack of substantive reforms in institutions such as the judicial branch; and the failure of the peace agreements to address economic inequality as one of the causes of the conflict (Musalo 2019). All of this underlines the importance of transitional justice procedures and security sector reform with a feminist perspective, which links up with current challenges of the women, peace and security agenda.

Another issue to take into account concerning feminicide, and one that can contribute to the debate on feminist security in Latin America, concerns the role of the state and impunity for violence, together with what is sometimes referred to as "new forms of war-making". Impunity

for violence against women is considered part of feminicide (Lagarde 2006) and a structural element of the system (Sagot Rodríguez 2017). Various authors have pointed to the fact that **institutional violence results in discrimination and a misogynistic approach to investigations, in expert opinions, in the administration of justice, and that it leads to impunity** (Lagarde 2006). In terms of the forms of violence, several authors consider that violence against women and girls is not random violence resulting from clashes between armed groups (state and non-state actors). Dawn Paley, a journalist based in Mexico, defines it as "a form of counter-insurgency where the framework of the community is very often the target of violence, the aim being to control territory and the population". According to Paley, we will only come to an accurate understanding of different forms of violence, such as the so-called wars on drugs, "by considering violence within a matrix of corporate interests, natural resources, infrastructure, and economic factors, as well as by honing in on the state's role in repression" (Paley 2018).

Feminicide studies have led some authors to establish various typologies in connection with the different expressions of violence. Segato proposes a distinction between the murder of women in the interpersonal sphere and in contexts in which the dynamics of interpersonal relationships do not operate – such as the massacres of women in Guatemala in the eighties and the present-day killing of women by drug smugglers –, due to the importance of providing specific guidance for feminist policies and practices, including police, judicial and medico-legal procedures, among other things, with the aim of reversing the culture of impunity surrounding violence (Segato 2016). Nevertheless, other authors have pointed to the porous boundaries between dynamics of an interpersonal and general nature where, for example, the killing of women and girls in El Salvador who have been forced to become the partners of gang members represents the intersection of intra-family and gang violence (Musalo 2019, 13).

4. SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

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The complexity of the security context in Latin America makes security sector reform (SSR) from a feminist perspective both an acute challenge and a priority for many of the actors involved in this field. Mainstreaming a gender perspective has thereby gained greater visibility since the launching of the international women, peace and security agenda (Coomaraswamy 2015; Mobekk 2010a).

SSR refers to a process of comprehensive transformation that offers opportunities to build a security system that is more democratic, transparent and inclusive, that transcends state security by placing special emphasis on human security and aspires to bring about a profound change in civilian-military relations. On this point, academic feminism has underlined the importance of taking into account the diverse security experiences and needs of women, men, girls and boys, with the understanding that their priorities, skills and roles are conditioned by the social processes and structures in which they live (Anderlini 2008; Bastick 2008; Mobekk 2010b). The gender perspective has consequently been identified as an essential factor if SSR is to be truly consistent with what are recognised as its fundamental principles, i.e. it is people-centred, locally owned and based on democratic norms (Bastick 2008). It is also conceived as a crucially important approach in transitional contexts where there exists the possibility of redefining the concepts of human security (Anderlini 2008). Along these lines, it has been argued that the gender approach allows for an increase in the diversity of local actors capable of becoming involved in the process of transforming the security system; it facilitates the identification of different security needs and experiences and provides access to justice for both men and women in a society; it encourages the setting up of more representative institutions and raises awareness of other issues as security problems – including sexual and gender violence. All of this with foreseeable positive effects in terms of sustainability, legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency (Anderlini 2008; Barnes 2009; Valasek 2008).

Authors like Vanessa Farr have maintained that many recent discussions on SSR have not contributed anything new from a feminist perspective as they have been issues that for many

years have been raised by academic feminism and activism to challenge traditional conceptions of security and the mechanisms and institutions that have helped to perpetuate them (Farr 2004).

Two main strategies for incorporating this gender perspective into SSR have been identified from the literature: gender balancing, which focuses on promoting a more equal participation of men and women in security institutions and oversight mechanisms, and gender mainstreaming in all aspects of SSR (Bastick 2008; Mobekk 2010b; Valasek 2008). Academic feminism and feminist activists, however, have called into question the gap between gender narratives and practices and SSR, as well as the form, rationale and consequences of their implementation. Authors such as Sanam Anderlini have warned that, in practice, the gender dimension of SSR has been considered of secondary importance and that its marginalisation has been brought about by various factors including the centrality of the state and its influence in security reform; the feeling that gender issues are imposed from outside; limited understanding of the idea of local ownership; and persistent exclusion in deeply patriarchal societies in which the idea of gender is either misinterpreted or identifies only with women (Anderlini 2008). Academic feminism has also warned of the need to integrate an intersectional and non-binary perspective to identify the gender-differentiated security access and agency needs in the population (Kunz and Valasek 2012). There have also been concerns about **the need in SSR processes for a careful and detailed enumeration of precisely who is excluded from participation in security-related decisions and an honest assessment of how this exclusion comes about and is maintained** (Farr 2004).

One of the main criticisms levelled at SSR calls attention to the pre-eminence of gender-levelling strategies that have favoured the "addition" of women, instead of promoting real transformative action in terms of behaviours, practices and hierarchies in security institutions (Kunz 2014; Mobekk 2010b). Along these lines there are concerns about the risk of women being co-opted in institutions that are markedly sexist, persistence of the marginalisation of women in key areas – such as security decision-making, supervision from civil society and positions of leadership in security institutions – and certain arguments of operational "effectiveness" used to promote women's participation in SSR that border on essentialism and instrumentalisation (Farr 2004; Kunz and Valasek 2012). At the same time, critics have argued that there is no deep commitment in SSR processes to the transformation of security institutions and that, in contexts where this does takes place, it does not necessarily lead to the questioning of militarism or of the cultures of masculinity sustained within military institutions (Clarke 2008). As far as Latin America is concerned, despite the implementation of various reforms in the region's armed forces and police forces, both the integration of a gender perspective into security policies and institutions and the effective participation of women in areas such as political representation, peace processes and state security and defence forces remain a major

challenge (López Méndez 2016). From a point of view strictly limited to participation, which as mentioned above does not necessarily lead to institutional change unless it is accompanied by a comprehensive integration of the gender perspective, women have accounted for a significant number of the irregular fighting forces in the region (up to one third in El Salvador or Colombia), whereas they only represent a small minority in the armed and security forces in Latin America (Donadio and Mazzott 2009; López Méndez 2016).

Several authors and feminist activists have also pointed out that the priority or **guiding principle for SSR should be meeting the security and justice needs of the people, more than the building of strong institutions** (Kunz and Valasek 2012). The gender perspective has highlighted the gender factors that explain how violence occurs and reoccurs, together with the distinct concept of what are areas of risk for men and for women. Along this line of reasoning the point has been made that an issue as important as gender violence has not been adequately addressed within the framework of SSR processes, despite having been identified as one of the main threats to human security in the world. This approach has been questioned because it emphasises the portrayal of women as victims.

This issue is of particular importance in Latin America and the Caribbean. Different authors have noted that there was a significant increase in the incidence of sexual and gender violence during armed conflicts in the region that continued after they came to an end, with particularly alarming rates of domestic and gender-based violence and a context of impunity that continues to exacerbate the problem (López Méndez 2016). In Central America, the United Nations has provided support to police in the collection of disaggregated data on crimes and offences, which has raised awareness of the high levels of violence against women (Anderlini 2008). In this context, **emphasis has been placed on the importance of focusing on preventive security models that give more relevance to the socio-cultural construction of gender, stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, gender inequalities as risk factors and the eradication of impunity for crimes of sexual and gender violence** through punitive, legal and access to justice measures that highlight the seriousness of these forms of violence (López Méndez 2016).

Research has also highlighted certain commitments made by states in the region as a result of women's activism and pressure from the feminist movement, including the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention, 1994). One particular initiative, which has had its ups and lows, is the establishment of specialised women's police stations or units in police stations across Latin America. First introduced in 1985 in Brazil, these stations are considered to be one of the earliest responses to the demands of women in this sphere, preceding even the adoption of specific laws on domestic gender violence in several countries (Jubb et al. 2008). The major-

ity are police stations that provide specialised services, legal aid, medical care and some even have the capacity to administer justice (as in Ecuador) (Anderlini 2008; Jubb et al. 2008). They exist in thirteen countries in Central and Latin America and in Brazil alone there are estimated to be more than 400. Comparative studies suggest that very little is known about their impact in terms of eradicating violence against women or empowering them to exercise their rights, and their contributions are inevitably limited because pre-existing gender power structures are not within their purview. In spite of these initiatives, violence against women, and in particular domestic violence, remains one of the most pressing security challenges in the region (Jubb et al. 2008).

Academic feminism and practical experience have highlighted a number of other issues that have gained visibility through the gender perspective in SSR and that are also of particular significance in Latin America. For example, focus has been placed on the gender dimension of small arms and light weapons, underlying harmful gender dynamics and inequalities between men and women and also between men, and on the necessary inclusion of women in arms control initiatives, in compliance with resolution 1325 (Farr, Myrtinnen and Schnabel 2009). At the same time, there have been warnings about how gender stereotypes can affect the response to armed violence and the disarmament and reintegration of armed actors if account is not taken of the fact that women can also be involved in and act as the perpetrators of arms-related violence (Puechguirbal, Loutis, and Man 2009).

The gender perspective in SSR has also underscored the importance and challenges of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) strategies in post-conflict and armed conflict situations, which in Latin America have focused on experiences in Central America and Colombia, and the role of ex-combatants in promoting gender equality in these processes (Anderlini 2008). At the same time, **a number of different realities have been described in which women act outside of the role usually prescribed to them as recipients of security and operate as providers of security, refuge and legal support to victims of different kinds of violence** (López Méndez 2016). Women in Latin America have also raised crucial issues concerning security and justice in society as a whole that have been directly linked to their own experiences of violence. One good example of this is the emphasis placed by various women's organisations on issues such as human rights abuses perpetrated by military officials and the demand for mechanisms to monitor and prosecute those responsible, as in the case of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and similar entities in other countries in the region (Anderlini 2008).

Although it is accepted that much remains to be done, the contribution by numerous women to the societal understanding of what really constitutes security is undeniable (Farr 2004). Given the shortcomings identified, various feminist authors have stressed the importance of

taking stock of the lessons learned, including from areas where parallels can be drawn, such as development studies and practice, in order to promote SSR that is truly gender responsive. In this regard, they have proposed that SSR should be solidly anchored in a participatory and gender-responsive assessment of security and justice requirements at both national and community levels; that it recognises the plurality of security and justice actors, including non-state providers; and that it includes formal and informal mechanisms for building trust and strengthening collaboration between community, customary and state actors (Kunz and Valasek 2012). The suggestions also point to the need for extreme urgency in addressing the scourge of violence against women, whether it is perpetrated at home or in public spaces, through legal reform and legislative initiatives supported by public education; that women's participation in all aspects of political decision-making, peacemaking and security be actively promoted and prioritised; and that both the current male domination of the security sector, and male culpability in violence against women, whether as perpetrators or through passively condoning such violence, be acknowledged and actions set in place to address and overcome its root causes (Farr 2004).

5. CONCLUSIONS

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Rethinking security from a feminist perspective represents a major theoretical and practical challenge. In an international context in which a growing number of states are questioning established standards of particular importance to women's human rights and gender equality and pursue this in multilateral forums such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Security Council (Taylor and Baldwin 2019), there is a crucial need for the reinforcement and strengthening of approaches that highlight the importance of gender analysis and feminist contributions in addressing security challenges. The challenges that feminist security studies have highlighted include the need to:

1) Pursue new ways to advance the women, peace and security agenda. The challenge remains for actors with security responsibilities to integrate a feminist perspective that will bring about a deeper transformation in both the conceptualisation of security itself and in the measures aimed at providing security to the population as a whole.

2) Incorporate into the discussions the voices of people living with multiple oppressions. This issue has become ever more pressing in a context like Latin America, where women and other populations in positions of exclusion, such as LGBT people and indigenous communities, among others, live in situations of high level insecurity and are often not considered to be subjects with agency in the field of security.

3) Carry out more in-depth research that draws attention to the multi-dimensional nature of security and the multiplicity of actors and fields of action relevant to security provision. There is an urgent need to develop public policies that recognise interdependence as a key factor for security.

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