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Youth, Peace, and Security

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Young people comprise the largest percentage of the global population (UN), and most young people live in the global south (Das Gupta et. al., 2014). In the peace, security and development fields, the importance of understanding the diverse lived experiences of youth is often highlighted in relation to the fact that over 400 million young people aged 15 to 29 live in a state or province where armed conflict or other organized violence took place in 2016; 23 % of the global youth population are affected, in some way, by armed conflict or other organized violence (Hagerty, 2017). New research and policy discourses are beginning to highlight the multifaceted

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ways that young people contribute to, and influence, processes of world politics, peace and security: as agents in formal and informal economies and peace processes, through nonviolent mass movements, and as community organizers and political activists, for example. After a brief historical context and discussion of the state of literature, this chapter describes key debates and future challenges in the field of youth, peace and security.

A Brief Historical Context

The deep history of ‘youth’ in relation to world peace and security issues has yet to be fully excavated. A near history would point to the mid 1990s when, with the identification of ‘new wars’, there developed international practitioner interest in child soldiers and other war-affected children, particularly in recently decolonized states in Africa, Latin America, and in post-cold war Eastern and Central Europe (e.g. Machel 1996; Brett and McCallin, 1998). For a recent synthesis and evaluation of the child soldier literature, see Haer (2019). Some of the research on war-affected young people also built on the psychology and education literatures focused on Israel, Northern Ireland and South Africa going back to the 1970s and 1980s, as well as earlier studies of children’s psychological functioning after the two world wars. For an overview of this literature, see Cairns (1996). In these literatures young people were viewed as both victims and perpetrators of armed conflict, as needing protection, having rights, and being resilient.

Beginning in the early 2000s, researchers began to pay attention not only to young people’s roles as combatants and/or victims of armed conflict, but also to their roles and experiences after wars have ended: young people came to be viewed as ‘post-conflict’ actors, and interested participants in peace processes, post-war reconstruction, development and reconciliation (see,

e.g. Schnabel and Tabyshalieva, 2013; Schwartz, 2010; Borer et al., 2007; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Kemper, 2005; McEvoy-Levy, 2001).

In international economic development circles they were also viewed in neoliberal terms, as societal assets and resources to be ‘harnessed’ and invested in for economic growth and stability. Youth were identified for interventions and study due to the supposed link between ‘youth bulges’ (Urdal, 2006; Urdal, 2004) and the new outbreak, or reoccurrence of civil war, political violence or unrest. A further expansion of interest in youth as a security threat resulted from the ‘global war on terror’ (Maira, 2016; Samad and Sen, 2007) and the roles of young people in uprisings against their governments in the MENA region since around 2011 (e.g. Paciello and Pioppi, 2018; Austin, 2011). The latter events have also spurred interest and debates in understanding youth-led social movements and activism (e.g. Sonay, 2017).

The United Nations Agenda on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) emerged from more than a decade of global advocacy by civil society, youth-led organisations, NGOs, governments and IGOs. It responded to major trends and events in world politics, such as those noted above, but it also built on prior research on children and youth and normative global commitments to young people’s rights. The pathbreaking United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015) recognizes youth (18-29) as having significant and positive roles in building and maintaining peace and security. Resolution 2419 (2018) further emphasises and calls for youth inclusion in peace processes.

The State of the Literature

The study of youth in International Relations is closely related to the study of children in the field which highlights the social construction of childhood and its relationship with processes of

militarization, securitization, global norm development, political economy and peacebuilding (see Beier, 2017; Beier, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015; Watson, 2015; Özerderm and Podder 2011; Carpenter 2010; Watson 2009; Brocklehurst, 2006; Kent 1995). Only a small number of works have explicitly linked youth and youthhoods to IR theories (for those, see, Berents, 2018; McEvoy-Levy 2018; Özerderm and Podder 2015). There is, however, a large multi-disciplinary literature linking youth with peacebuilding and security that includes comparative politics and area studies, anthropology, psychology and sociology. Throughout much of this literature it is emphasized that youth experiences of peace and security are gendered and need to be deeply contextualized (Pruitt et al., 2018; Pruitt, 2015). This section of the chapter cannot provide a comprehensive overview of this literature but it endeavors to highlight some of the key areas receiving scholarly attention.

Youth Soldiering, Security and Development

The literature on youth combatants overlaps with the large number of child soldier studies (see Haer 2019) and includes local ethnographic studies (e.g. Richards, 1996), and studies focused on reintegration and psycho-social interventions with former young combatants (eg. Özerderm and Podder, 2015; Wessells, 2006). Through gathering individual recruitment narratives of young fighters (e.g. Brett and Sprecht, 2004; Venhaus, 2010; Baines 2011), the literature highlights push and pull factors such as land and resource pressures, family and social expectations, and survival strategies, while also noting that these factors also affect young people who do not resort to arms, and underscoring the wider historical, political and economic context of colonialism/post-colonialism (e.g. Abbink and Kessel, 2005). For some young people, involvement with armed groups can provide a form of meaningful political action, related to community and other collective loyalties (e.g. Barber 2009; Hart 2008). Young people are

resilient and creative in conflict zones, and engage in a variety of self-help activities and tactical forms of agency (e.g. Boas and Dunn 2017; Peters 2007; Utas, 2005). The literature also underlines the importance of effective (re)integration in breaking cycles of violence but finds that often DDR programs are not sensitive to the diverse needs of young people, to how young people's identities are shaped by conflict (Özerderm and Podder, 2015), and to how both war and the international interventions associated with reintegration change local understandings of 'youth' in various ways (e.g. Bolten, 2012; Shepler, 2005).

The development of a 'Global War on Terror' increased political and policy attention to youth as a potential security threat (e.g. Lombardi et al., 2014), with a particular emphasis on Muslim youth's potential for radicalization to violent extremism (Maira, 2016). National governments and international institutions continue to seek to identify drivers of extremism with emphasis on particular youth populations both domestic and overseas (e.g. Slachmuisjlder, 2017; USAID, 2009). Yet, as will be further discussed in the debates section below, many scholars and practitioners argue against a focus on youth as responsible for, or prone to, violence without adequately addressing grievances and needs for structural change, noting that such an approach is likely to not only be unjust and racist but also ineffective (e.g. Sommers, 2018; Attran, 2017; Novelli 2017).

Development scholars and policy reports emphasize that most young people are not involved in violence and instead seek work/livelihoods, social and physical mobility, and meaningful lives (e.g. Ansell, 2016; Dauite et al., 2006). Factors such as "failed masculinity, urban desperation, and forceful governance" (Sommers, 2012), a closed state, elite divisions or tensions, aligned with mass mobilization networks (Schwartz, 2010), and the inability to find jobs that match qualifications and expectations (Honwana, 2012; Dhillon and Youseff, 2009) present significant

challenges for large cohorts of youth, who are unable to complete culturally prescribed scripts for transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, unemployed and underemployed youth are not passive or idle but are creatively making do, working in informal economies (Honwana, 2012). The current generation of young people are concerned with increasing intergroup inequalities in regards to access to quality education and formal employment (Olawale 2017; Honwana, 2012). But Walton found that ‘both the theoretical and the empirical cases for using youth employment programmes as a stand-alone tool for reducing violent conflict are extremely weak’ (2010, p.1). When young people who received vocational trainings do not find meaningful employment, their feelings of marginalization and unfairness increases (Mercy Corps, 2015). Evidence suggests employment programs need support mechanisms for addressing social inequalities and political exclusion of young people (Hoffman, 2015).

Youth, Peace and Reconciliation

The literature on youth, peace and reconciliation argues for and documents the rights, capabilities, and interests of the young in peacebuilding work, broadly defined (Berents 2018; Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Özerderm and Podder, 2015; De Felice and Wisler, 2007; Borer et al., 2007; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Kemper, 2005; McEvoy-Levy, 2001). It examines the roles and agency of young people in the different stages of peace processes and their roles in truth commissions and transitional justice (Denov and Kahn, 2019; Heykoop and Adoch, 2017; Ladisch, 2017; Mollica, 2017), and highlights the capacities of young people for creating spaces for dialogue and mediation (Aiello et al., 2018; Mubashir and Grizelj, 2018; Singh, 2018), including with religious youth leaders (Cox et al., 2017). Recognizing an inadequacy in top down approaches, the literature also identifies micro-level and local everyday peace projects involving and led by youth (e.g. Paung Sie Facility, 2018; McEvoy-Levy 2006; Kemper, 2005)

including, for example, those focused on art (Labor, 2018) and music (Pruitt, 2013). Further, it expands the narrow, elite understandings of ‘political’ and ‘peacebuilding’ by showing how young people ‘build peace in their everyday lives’ by ‘perpetuating the rhythms and of relationships and practices of day-to day life’ in complex resistance to ‘institutional marginalization’ and state neglect (Berents, 2018, 8-9). The positive peacebuilding role young people play in conflict zones is identified in both qualitative studies, such as those above, and in quantitative evaluations (Justino, 2018).

The passage of UNSCR 2250 and 2419 has further spurred/produced research on the evidence of youth involvement in peacebuilding and the prevention of violence. *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (2018) is the most comprehensive study to date, which brings together key literature and arguments that centralise youth in the international peace and security field (Simpson, 2018). Nascent research/literature has also focused on youth engagement in the negotiation and technical phases of peace processes over the last two decades (e.g. Grizelj, 2019; Alar, 2018; Alwazir, 2013). Young people have been involved in “monitoring implementation of ceasefire agreements, mediating intra-ethnic disputes, supplying legal and logistical support for peace negotiations”, and they are also “providing psychosocial support for former combatants and using media and the online platforms to promote peace agreements to broad constituencies” (Altiok and Grizelj, 2019, p. 9). This research focuses on why and how young people matter for the sustainability of peace agreements.

Key Debates

Defining Youth

One key debate that drives the literature, practice and policy of understanding and engaging young people in International Relations is *defining* youth: who do we understand to be *youth*, and how do definitions vary? Key arguments between youth studies and the peace, security and development literature have focused on defining youth chronologically, as a biological phase between certain ages; functionally, as a transition from childhood to adulthood marked by rituals or physical changes; and as a socio-cultural construct through the role that individuals play in a given social context (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Sommers 2015; Honwana, 2012). Understanding the key debates around how youth is defined supports international and local institutions and actors to take a more nuanced approach and appreciation for the complexity of the youth, peace and security nexus.

In international discourse, often for programming and policy approach purposes, international institutions and actors have placed emphasis in defining youth through age-bound categories – engaging youth as a key stakeholder category. The UN General Assembly defines youth as those aged between 15 and 24 years old, a category also adopted by The World Bank. The World Health Organization defines adolescents as aged 10-19 years, youth as aged 15-24, and ‘young people’ as encompassing both these age boundaries from 10-24 years (Definition of Youth, UNDESA, 2018). The UN Habitat Youth Fund and the African Youth Charter, on the other hand, define youth aged 15-35 (United Nations, “Definition of Youth”). Most recently, UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security has defined youth as persons aged 18-29 years old, though ‘further noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels.’ The lack of standardized age-based categories makes gathering quantitative

data on youth difficult, limiting the systematic documentation and analysis of youth, peace and security issues (Simpson, 2018, p. 10).

The age-defined categorization of youth does not, however, capture the conceptions of ‘youth’ across cultures. Regionally and particularly locally, youth definitions vary. Chronological definitions are common in the West and are an individualistic approach to development, whereby youth are defined purely by age and not interaction with other people or events (Schwartz, 2010). A gender-equal age of maturity is also a Western concept, and not necessarily shared by all societies. Youth are interconnected and inter-defined within their socio-cultural and political contexts. The meaning of youth, and the way society regards youth, varies across time and space, as well as within societies (Mubashir and Grizelj, 2018). Young people as a stakeholder category must be underscored as a heterogenous social group, far from homogeneous (e.g. Dwyer, 2015). Youth do not all have the same level or experience of exclusion, marginalization and inequality (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005).

While no universal definition for youth exists, defining youth as a transitional period aligns with cognitive development theories/studies who recognize ‘youthhood’ as a period of malleability, openness, and vulnerability from childhood to adulthood. Before the adoption of UNSCR 2250, young people faced a gap in realizing their rights, whereby the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990) provided legal protection for those under the age of 18. In internationally defining young people as 18-29 years old, UNSCRs 2250 and 2419 enables young people to exercise their legal rights for protection, growth, access to justice and development ahead of reaching ‘adulthood’.

Others have argued that viewing and discussing youth as an ‘in-between stage’ or ‘process of becoming’ limits our view of youth as a form of personhood and lived experience requiring

understanding in the present (Raby, 2007; Tyskå & Côté, 2015; Woo, 2012). In conflict and violence situations, definitions of youthhood may further be altered. The transition to adulthood may be ‘stalled’, with limited opportunities to progress socio-economically, politically or functionally. Honwana (2012) has described this complex as ‘waithood’, where young people face restraints that deny them the power that adults have in the greater political economy (Schwartz, 2010). Alternatively, a child or youth may be “forced to grow up” through the experience of being a soldier, armed rebel, refugee, or sexual slave with a changed psychological state and identity (Kemper, 2005, p. 8).

Gendered discourses may also limit the way youth are perceived in peace and security discourse and practice. Peace and security discourses are often embedded within or infused with neocolonial assumptions about youth that draw on intersecting assumptions about age, race, and gender (Berents, 2016). Burman argues that it is frequently framed “good girls need to be saved, but bad boys need to be contained” (1994, 245). The problematic, and strongly critiqued, ‘youth bulge’ discourse for example demonstrates the lazy assumptions about dangerous young men while rendering invisible the many young men who are actively working for peace in their local contexts (Pruitt et al., 2018; Sommers, 2011); while protectionist discourses that infantilize young women and render them passive victims erases young women’s actual or potential political agency (Lee-Koo, 2013). Challenging limited gendered frames is one way to better recognise youth as a heterogeneous category, which further intersects with other identities such as race, religion, ethnicity, caste, class, culture, context and political affiliations (Simpson, 2018, p. 12). The growth of literature and research that emphasises the diversity of youth experiences and definitions underscores the need for strengthened application of these findings to peace and security policy and practice.

Securitization, the Liberal Peace and P/CVE

The liberal peace paradigm that dominated the end of the 20th century, has in recent decades been critiqued for its hegemonic approach and the way it marginalizes and erases differentiated experiences and expertise (Berents, 2018; Randazzo, 2016; Richmond, 2016; Richmond and Mac Ginty, 2015; Mac Ginty 2012; Richmond, 2011). Neoliberal ideals reinforce understandings of youth as proto-citizens, seeing post conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding priorities for youth through limited economic frames that limit capacity to recognize youth's active agency (Honwana 2012; Giroux 2009; Kemper 2005).

In post-conflict environments, peacebuilding is increasingly being securitized. Securitization, particularly in the context of the liberal peace project, sees issues constructed “in security terms, in other words as an existential threat” (Buzan and Hansen, 2009). The increasing securitization of development and humanitarian sectors has resulted in the re-inscription of power within hegemonic institutions and the exclusion of marginal groups who become understood as threats to be contained (Pugh et al., 2013; Duffield, 2001). These threats pose a risk to the imagined order of the liberal peace project. Youth are disproportionately affected due to dominant and powerful stereotypes and assumptions that operate. These stereotypes position youth—frequently shorthand for young men—as potential dangers and disruptors including as peace process spoilers. These stereotypes are embedded in gendered, and racialized assumptions that reproduce neocolonial framings of the world whereby young men in the global south are seen as a risk to their immediate environment and also to the global order (Pruitt et al., 2018). In contrast young women have been stereotyped as either passive, hidden enablers, or as the biological reproducers of violence. For example, Anne Hendrixson argues that young Muslim women have been stereotyped as ‘birthing’ terrorists (Hendrixson, 2004). Ironically, the discourse has also in some

cases opened up new possibilities for young women's agency, resistance and activism (Austin, 2011). But, for example, Distler argues that the securitization of youth in Timor Leste has institutionalized the potential imagined danger of youth which both justifies ongoing international intervention and also limits the space for youth to move and participate in society (2017).

The consequences of securitized policy making in the context of liberal peacebuilding are evident in relation to P/CVE responses. As Mario Novelli has noted P/CVE programming may in fact promote youth extremism due to a "lack of reflexivity, humility, historical memory and nuance on the part of the architects and practitioners of CVE" (2017, 836). In fact, CVE efforts have not replaced traditional military or 'hard security' approaches and target youth for surveillance, criminalization and state violence. Larry Attree points out, that CVE implementers have failed to integrate the lessons from many years of security assistance, aid delivery, peacebuilding programming and conflict analysis (2017). Sommers (2018) argues for explicit focus on youth in CVE programming, a strong gender analysis, and recognition that government and policies often promote rather than prevent violent extremism (Sommers, 2018). At the same time increasing interconnections between peacebuilding and CVE policy discourses (Holmes, 2017) place competing ideas of youth in tension: it becomes more difficult for policymakers to imagine youth as constructive peacebuilders when the CVE literature presents youth as a significant threat to be managed. With funding at international and national levels increasingly linked to addressing P/CVE the capacity for youth to be recognized as legitimate political and social actors is reduced (Sommers 2018; Sukarieh and Tannock 2018). An important concern is that negative portrayals of youth form "contagious stereotypes" that result in "policy panic" (Simpson, 2018, pp. x, 30-31).

The implications of YPS for securitization of youth are already being debated. Margaret Williams (2016) suggests that resolution 2250 connotes a positive shift in international policy perspective away from viewing youth simplistically as victims or perpetrators towards viewing youth ‘as agents of positive change and peace.’ But other scholars have been more critical, seeing the securitization of youth in the latest UN resolution (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). Furthermore, these same authors argue that ‘the ideal of youth as peacebuilders is a model for eliciting youth support for the current global and economic order’ (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). However, it can also be argued that the adoption of 2250 provides political support for youth-led peacebuilding organizations to strategically resist against personal and structural experiences of injustice and challenge the securitization of peacebuilding (Ahtiok, forthcoming). Youth resistance through peacebuilding and protest targets both causes and symptoms of the current global order.

Political Inclusion

Addressing youth political exclusion is not a new concern for international peace and security actors. Long before the adoption of UNSCR 2250, counter-terrorism and development agencies were motivated by the notion of “youth as a potential threat to security”, treating youth political inclusion and participation as a strategy to reduce violence and crime (Ebata et al., 2006). Although approaching youth political engagement from a violence and crime reduction perspective may yield positive results (Mercy Corps, 2012), this type of approach continues to be controversial among many of those involved in youth work practice, peacebuilding and development, particularly those arguing for complex, non-essentialized understandings of youth as agents of change. A comparative analysis of supranational and national youth policy frameworks found a common emphasis on youth as objects of concern and risk but also the

belief that civic engagement was good for both youth and their societies (Chaskin et al., 2018). The YPS policy agenda embraces ‘youth as peacebuilders’ and presents a positive rationale for why youth political inclusion and participation matters for peace and security.

The YPS approach is seen to be necessary due to widespread reciprocal mistrust and fear between young people and their governments and multilateral systems (Simpson, 2018). In many countries, young people are excluded from formal political spaces, processes, and institutions. Young people increasingly vote less, are disengaged from political parties and hold limited seats in national parliaments (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2017). Structural barriers, such as the gap between the minimum age for candidacy and voting, play an important role in discouraging young people to take an active role in political life (Krook, 2016). Lower rates of youth engagement in conventional forms of politics does not necessarily signify political apathy, but often indicates a form of democratic disconnect: “a gap between institutional understandings and expectations of young citizens and the nature and substance of youthful forms of political identification and action.” (Collin, 2015, p. 155). Many young people have also lost confidence in the abilities of conventional politics to solve the challenges they face (Sloam, 2014; Laiq, 2013).

The YPS agenda demands that governments and international organizations act to close this civic trust gap. It suggests that the protection of youth dissent and protest against corrupt, undemocratic, illegitimate political processes is the appropriate way to (re)build civic trust (Simpson, 2018). In the post 9/11 era, where surveillance and intolerance to dissent particularly target young people (Giroux, 2013; Maira, 2016), this is a bold but a promising demand for international peace and security actors to act upon the peace and security challenges of young

people. Yet, such youth demands for political voice will likely continue to exist in tension with the perceived security interests of powerful states and collective security organizations.

Another set of debates occurs in the wake of the most recent YPS related security council resolution: by adopting UNSCR 2419 (2018), the YPS agenda more strictly follows in the footsteps of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and directs the debate on political participation towards formal peace processes. Certainly, there is much to learn from the WPS experience including about avoiding an ‘add and stir’ solution to inclusion. WPS activists point out that their impact (nearly 20 years after UNSCR 1325) has been incremental and uneven. As a model, WPS is technically different, however. On the one hand, here are a number of strong and well-established women rights advocacy groups and women-focused mediation networks. On the other hand, youth organizations, leaders and staff are replaced in every generational cohort. This makes it more difficult for young people to maintain institutional ties and support for their inclusion.

Thus, youth inclusion in formal peace processes comes with unique challenges and dilemmas including overcoming stereotypes, tokenism, the natural turn-over in youth leaders and staff, and entrenched elder-power systems. The latter challenge at the elite state/IGO level is mirrored in local resistance to youth inclusion, especially when it entails real sharing of power or challenging elders’ knowledge and practices. For example, Bolten (2012) notes the conflict between former young combatants and community elders in Sierra Leone due to the youth’s ‘adoption of reintegration and development discourse’ and rejection of manual labor. The YPS discourse has the potential to disrupt and/or shape social relationships at the national and local levels as well.

A further challenge occurs when international actors, such as the UNDPKO’s Community Violence Reduction, approach place youth into a ‘community actors’ category rather than seeing

them as actors with specific experiences and skills (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Organization, 2017). For example, while young women and men are the main beneficiaries of DDR programs (United Nations, 2006), they are also main facilitators of disengagement and reintegration processes (Simpson, 2018, p. 108). Realizing youth participation in justice reform processes is instrumental in preventing post-agreement criminal violence and restoring trust between state and society (O'Mahony et al., 2012). This is why youth representative participation within peace negotiations has a lot to offer in improving disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, security sector and criminal justice reform processes (Altiok & Grizelj, 2019).

Yet, representative participation alone is insufficient to make the participation of youth meaningful in peace processes (Kurtenbach and Pawelz, 2015). Similar to other current political processes, youth political engagement and expressions in the context of peace processes often take alternative (non-traditional) forms, such as mass protests and social media activism to legitimize or socialize peace processes (Altiok & Grizelj, 2019), and to lobby for and affect change in many settings (see e.g. McEvoy-Levy 2018; Oosterom 2018; Bosch, 2017; Taft 2010). This demonstrates that the power and leverage of youth in making peace is not solely sourced in young people's proximity to formal negotiation tables or political institutions. Protecting and supporting the power of youth movements and activism underscores the need to equally prioritize all forms of engagement, not only youth in Track I (elite dialogue) processes and avoiding 'programmatization' of youthful political participation (Altiok and Grizelj, 2019).

Although youth political inclusion in the context of peace processes provides invaluable lessons to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of these processes, this limits the value of youth political inclusion to countries affected by armed conflicts. Regardless of whether young people

live in conflict affected countries or not, there is a great overlap in the ways in which young people experience state violence across the world (Giroux, 2013). This is why the debate over meaningful political participation of youth in international relations needs to further explore the relationship between youth political inclusion and reducing state and structural violence that occurs in, and is perpetrated by, so-called “peaceful countries” (McEvoy-Levy, 2018). It is crucial that the debate over meaningful political participation of youth is being shaped by the needs of young people, rather than the needs and political agendas of governments and international organizations.

Conclusion: Continuing Tensions and Future Trajectories

Pervasive limited understandings of definitions of youth and the way in which policies are developed to ‘manage’ or ‘save’ them in conflict-affected contexts result in limited engagement with young people’s actual lived experience in conflict contexts, and the marginalization of youth as having expertise in their own contexts when developing policy to respond to violence and build peace. There are tensions that continue to exist in defining youth as a transition to adulthood from childhood. This is also evident in the tension around the preference for bounded definitions of youth in policy practice and for flexible, ambiguous definitions in academia, with a need to bridge academic research into IR practice/policy.

There will continue to be tensions, and the need for further studies, about securitization in relation to peacebuilding and about programs related to youth employment and political participation. The securitization of peacebuilding discourse scripts youth as a problem to be solved, designing programs and projects that presuppose their delinquency and criminality. There is an assumption among international policy-makers, organizations and donors that it is

possible to solve the problem of youth participation in violence through job creation programs (Izzi, 2013) or education (King, 2018). Such monocausal approaches fall short of addressing the complex and multilayered experiences and aspirations of young people.

The largest youth population the world has ever seen are going to demand accountability from leaders, the renewal or creation of meaningful social contracts between governments and their peoples, and delivery on development promises. They are also going to make change in their own ways and particularly through social movements, social media, and at the everyday micro level of social organization. Important issues now and in the future include climate change and migration. Recent youthful political action targets the catastrophic impacts of climate change (see Skillington, 2019). Many youth see the politics of their governments, international organizations and development policies of international financial institutions as responsible for the emergence of these macro-level problems. Young lives are deeply affected by the increasing securitization of cross border travel and migration enforcement which compels minority youth into acts of ‘docility’, self-erasure and identity denial (Castenada and Mello, 2019; Finn et al., 2018). Yet, these practices are increasingly being critiqued and resisted by youth who are organizing at the local level (e.g. Luiselli 2017; Seif et al., 2014).

The work undertaken by youth in addressing insecurity and building peace can often be fraught and dangerous. From the assassination attempt on then sixteen-year-old Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai (Yousafzai and Lamb 2013) to attacks and killings of youth leaders in communities that declared themselves ‘zones of peace’ in Colombia (Sanford, 2003), and indigenous youth’s contributions to the protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the USA (Ferguson, 2018), youth activists and peacebuilders face often significant threats to their work and lives. Taking young people’s presence seriously in spaces of peace and security,

requires recognition of the risks and dangers that confront these young people. In moving the YPS agenda forward, the IR research, policy and practice field must be adamant in understanding the diverse lived experiences, perspectives, needs and desires of young people across the world; not siloing youth as a stakeholder category that can be easily boxed and programmed.

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List of Abbreviations

CVE: Countering Violent Extremism

P/CVE: Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

UN: United Nations

UNDESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDPKO: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

YPV: Youth, Peace and Security

WPS: Women Peace and Security