

## **Violent Conflict and the Protection of Women from Sex and Gender-Based Violence: A Third World Feminist Critique of the United Nations Women, Peace, and Security Agenda**

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**Abstract :** This paper examines the international legal framework established to address the challenges women and girls experience in situations of violent conflict. The United Nations (UN) women, peace, and security agenda (hereafter WPS agenda, the Agenda) aspire to make wars safer for women. It recognizes women's agency in armed conflict and their victimization and formulates measures for their protection. The Agenda also acknowledges women's participation in conflict transformation and post-conflict reconstruction. It also calls for the involvement of women in conflict transformation, encourages the protection of women from sex and gender-based violence (SGBV), and provides relief and recovery from conflict-related SGBV. Using Third World Critical Feminist Theory, this paper argues that the WPS agenda overly focus on the protection of women from SGBV occurring in the less developed and conflict-ridden states in the global south, obscures the complicity of western states and economies to the problem, and silences the privileges that such states derive from war economies that continue to fuel conflict. This protectionist approach of the UN also obliterates other equally pressing problems in need of attention, like the high rates of economic degradation in conflict-ravaged societies of the global south. Prioritising protection also 'others' the problem, obliterating any sense of interconnections across geographical locations and situating women in the less developed economies of the global south as the victims and their men as the perpetrators. Prioritising protection ultimately situates western societies as saviours of Third World women with no recourse to their role in engendering and sustaining war. The paper demonstrates that this saviour mentality obliterates chances of any meaningful coalition between the local and the international in framing and addressing the issue, as solutions are formulated from a specific lens—the white hegemonic lens.

**Keywords :** conflict, protection, security, SGBV

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