Politics of the Olive Branch: Environmental peacebuilding and the nexus of natural resources, violent conflict, and peace

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3999 Independent Study

Spring, 2023

Land Acknowledgement

This project explores the relationship between people and their land and natural resources. It is all the more important than, to preface this project, that is conducted through Loyola Marymount University, by acknowledging the Tongva peoples as the land stewards of Tovaangar. LMU resides on stolen land and seized territory of the Tongva peoples, who in the face of ongoing settler colonialism are forced to continue to claim their place and right to their land. With gratitude to study on this land, this project is committed to center the legacies of Indigenous land stewardship.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to BCLA for research funding support of this independent project that gave me the opportunity and space to focus on reading review and knowledge building.

Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Ramos, for your role as my co-research advisor and for your guidance in lending expertise to the international relations and security side of this project, particularly surrounding the foundations of peacebuilding and processes of peace.

Thank you to Dr. Tyler Harlan, for your role as my co-research advisor and for your continued support over the past four years. Sincere thanks to lending your environmental and spatial expertise in and outside of classes that has largely informed my research agenda around international environmental policy and culminated in this independent project.

Key Terms

Environmental Peacebuilding, Environment – Conflict Nexus, Climate Security, Environmental Cooperation, Demilitarization, Decolonization

Abstract

At the intersection of the natural environment, conflict, and peace, the study and practice of environmental peacebuilding rests on the recognition that thoughtful management and collective cooperation around environmental issues supports processes of peace and deters cycles of violent conflict. Through a) exploring the environment – conflict nexus, b) analyzing the subsequent field of climate security and c) tracing the theoretical and practical evolution of environmental peacebuilding, this project argues that a militarized approach to environmental peacebuilding is rooted within a patriarchal system that has legitimized military means as the central tool for resolving conflict, and that the field must shift to a demilitarized and decolonized framework that prioritizes Indigenous land stewardship. This paper contributes to the larger body of research that emphasizes cooperative human relationship building around the environment and argues that effective environmental peacebuilding will require a demilitarized and decolonized framework to elicit sustainable peace.

I. INTRODUCTION

At the intersection of the natural environment, conflict, and peace, the study and practice of environmental peacebuilding rests on the recognition that thoughtful management and collective cooperation around environmental issues supports the prevention, reduction, resolution and recovery from conflict (Brown et al., 2022; Dresse et al., 2018). For political scientists and environmental scholars alike, environmental peacebuilding is an acknowledgment of the ways in which violent conflict, peace, the environment, and increasingly the climate crisis, are fundamentally interconnected. This research is an opportunity to divert from the mainstream policy and rhetoric that frames environmental challenges as a catalyst of conflict, and towards a sustainable and effective framework that views these challenges as a catalyst for peace (Brown et al., 2022). The field of environmental peacebuilding is multidisciplinary, spanning concerns, that include, but are not limited to, the environmental consequences of war (Austin et al., 2000), the use of natural resources to finance armed conflict (Ross, 2004), the dynamics of disasters and conflict (Brancati, 2007), environmental factors in peace negotiations (Keels et al., 2019), the potential for cooperation around mutual interests in shared natural resources (Conca et al., 2002), links among post-conflict peacebuilding, climate resilience and natural resource management (Ide et al., 2021) or the focus on Global North – South power imbalances and divides (Mac Ginty, 2015) that influence systems of oppression and by extension, who controls natural resources.

Environmental peacebuilding as a field of study and as a set of initiatives is neither governed by a set of distinct environmental policies, nor guided by a coherent set of disciplinary theories (Dresse et al., 2019). The field rests at a unique, and often contradictory, nexus of environment, conflict, cooperation and peace, and has evolved through the years to become technical and backed by multilateral organizations. An emerging priority for the international environmental policy research agenda, environmental peacebuilding is now a central tenant for international organizations (Dresse et al., 2019). However, many people and communities are involved in practices that aren't necessarily defined by the largely Western conception of "environmental peacebuilding:" historically and to this present day,

Indigenous groups are continually engaged in various forms of cooperative and collective connection building around natural resources and their environment (Mac Ginty, 2011).

A. A Word on Definitions

Definitions of environmental peacebuilding spans specific and technical formulations to expansive and critical ways of conceptualizing the emerging field. This lack of organization comes in part from the field's interdisciplinary nature and the diversity of actors involved (Dresse et al., 2019). Environmental peacebuilding scholar, Tobias Ide, provides the definition, "Environmental peacebuilding comprises the multiple approaches and pathways by which the management of environmental issues is integrated in and can support conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution and recovery" (Ide et al., 2021). The Environmental Law Institute and Environmental peacebuilding Association's shared definition states, "Environmental peacebuilding integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery to build resilience in communities affected by conflict" (Brown et al., 2022). A frequently cited definition by Dresse, Fischhendler, Nielsen and Zikos states, "Environmental peacebuilding is the process through which environmental challenges shared by the (former) parties to a violent conflict are turned into opportunities to build lasting cooperation and peace" (Dresse et al. 2019). Alternative definitions rely on different conceptions of environmental peacebuilding itself, including "environmental peacemaking", "ecological diplomacy", and "peace ecology" that further the lack of a cohesive and overarching definition.

The effort to define environmental peacebuilding also includes varying understandings of related umbrella terms, including "conflict," and "peace." Peace and peacebuilding scholar, Galtung, writes that violence can be direct, whether physical or verbal, or structural (Galtung, 1996). Peace ranges from negative peace, the absence of violence, to positive peace, the presence of justice that includes the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peace (Galtung, 1996; Ide, 2017; Dress et al. 2019). Violent conflict refers to the physical force used by at least two competing parties, often involving non-state actors and governments (Brown et al., 2021; Baechler, 1998). Using Galtung's conception of peace, both positive and negative, and drawing from the definitions of Ide et al. (2021), Dresse et al.

(2019) and the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (n.d.), this project leaves the specific definition of environmental peacebuilding open in an effort to emphasize the shift from technical and multilateral organization environmental peacebuilding initiatives, to encompass the more expansive human practice of building cooperation and sustainable peace and relationships around the environment and shared natural resources.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Viewing environmental peacebuilding as an effective opportunity to more thoughtfully address the relationships between conflict, peace, the environment and climate change, this paper picks up on the side of critical environmental peacebuilding. This project begins by reviewing the literature in three key areas: A) the Environment – Conflict Nexus, that addresses both sides of the debate surrounding the environment as a catalyst for violent conflict; B) Climate Security, detailed as a subset of securitized and IR theory dominant policy and rhetoric that has emerged in one direction from the environment – conflict nexus, and C) the Evolution of Environmental Peacebuilding, that explores the growth of the body of work and initiatives that have come to contrast climate security discourse and that largely critiques the environment – conflict nexus. From this literature review, this paper will use qualitative analysis to discuss fledgling issues within the emerging body of critical environmental peacebuilding, including the connection of gender, militarism, and decolonization. Incorporating feminist and Indigenous scholarship, this project argues that a militarized approach to environmental peacebuilding is rooted within a patriarchal system that has legitimized military means as the central tool for resolving conflict, and that the field must shift to a decolonized framework that prioritizes Indigenous land stewardship. This paper contributes to the larger body of research that emphasizes cooperative human relationship building around the environment and argues that effective environment peacebuilding will require a demilitarized and decolonized framework to elicit sustainable peace.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Environment – Conflict Nexus

At the end of the Cold War, scholars made arguments to broaden the field of security to encapsulate not just traditional security threats, but to address non-traditional security threats, including environmental concerns (Ullman, 1983; Walt, 1991). It is within this background that the environment – conflict nexus or "environment conflict debate," emerged (Buzan, 2009). This debate began surrounding the question of natural resource scarcity, or surplus, that might increase the risk of conflict (Maxwell et al. 2000; Theisen, 2008). From the late 1980's to today, many scholars have published works linking natural resource scarcity to the onset of conflict (Cooley 1984; Homer-Dixon, 1999). Commonplace were claims that water security would soon rank in importance with military security (Starr et al., 2019), along with arguments that a strong correlation can be made that links various resource and environmental problems with prospects for war or peace (Gleick, 1989), or that there is a long history that suggests access to resources as a primary cause of war (El-Sayed et al., 2017).

Along with resource scarcity arguments that fall under the environment – conflict nexus, increasingly, climate change and environmental degradation are framed as a direct catalyst for conflict. These argument's pose environmental problems as one of the greatest threats to international stability (Lipschutz et al., 1990). Scholars are not alone in this positioning, as politicians, international organization leaders and other prominent stakeholders have affirmed this linkage for decades. Notably, the UN has published multiple documents on "climate change and conflict" and "violent conflict and environmental degradation" (UN, 2009). Much of the current field that falls under climate change and conflict hopes to make sense of disparate findings, with detailed efforts in organizing the literature (Elliott, 1996; Koubi, 2019; Salehyan, 2008).

In response to literature on the environment – conflict nexus came a body of critical research that spans disciplines of climate justice as well as gender studies, and critiques both scarcity – conflict and climate – conflict arguments. Scarcity literature almost entirely rests on the "ethnocentric assumption" that those in the Global South will devolve into violence at the experience of resource scarcity (Barnett, 2000). This argument is not similarly applied to people living in the industrialized Global North. The claims that environmental degradation will cause conflict over scarce resources such as water and

growing populations is based on a range of ad hoc studies with no clear methods nor consensus, and further, portrays nuanced ecological issues within mainstream international relations terms (Salehyan, 2014; Buhag, 2016). This position argues that the environment – conflict "trope" others the Global South as an entity in need of saving (Barnett, 2000; Shirazi, 2020).

B. Climate Security

From the environment – conflict nexus, emerged the pervasive discourse and policy surrounding climate security. Fueled by the first UN Security Council debate on climate change and security, as well as the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a subset of the environment – conflict debate re-emerged with renewed energy in the mid-2000s, surrounding the hypothesized connection between climate change, conflict and security.Dyer writes, "For every degree that the average global temperature rises, so do the number of failed and failing states, and very probably the incidence of internal and international wars" (Dyer, 2011). Authors, organizations and other involved stakeholders emphasize links of climate change's expected implications on national and international security (Garcia, 2010; Mathew, 2002). Climate change and security literature has permeated the mainstream discourse of international politics, resting often on methodologically flawed formulations of the environment's *causal* relationship to violent conflict (Steichen, 2019). The straightforward, albeit methodologically unclear, connection between climate, conflict and security has infiltrated mainstream politics, organizations, rhetoric and even the national security establishment (Floyd, 2009).

Through deliberate quantitative research, it is clear that the correlation between climate change, conflict and security is not as straightforward as portrayed in political and academic spaces (Deudney, 2018). The most comprehensive assessment of the scientific literature to date, the Human Security chapter in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report, states that "collectively, the research does not conclude that there is a strong positive relationship between warming and armed conflict" (Busby, 2008; Buhaug, 2015). "Climate security" initially appeared to be a good idea, as it was thought it might push traditional security analysts to prioritize the issues that "really matter" (De Wilde, 2001). Dyer explains, "It plays down the values traditionally associated with the

nation-state—identity, territoriality, sovereignty—and implies a different set of values associated with environmental change—ecology, globality, and governance' (Dyer, 2001). There are expansive claims that the framing of environmental security, "increased the relevance of environmental problems in the political agenda" (McDonald, 2013), as it is a politically palatable way to speak urgently about climate change.

While "climate security" may have been successful with its increasing widespread use in political and academic spaces, those aligned with pushing back against the environment – conflict nexus argue that climate security is neither useful nor advised. Securitizing the environment is ineffective, dangerous, and frames climate change as a traditional security threat (Hartmann, 2006; Brown and Mclemmen, 2009; Barnett, 2010). The discourse framing climate change as an security threat renders climate change governable as a security issue (Deudney, 2018), to which there are inequitable consequences as well as ineffective outcomes when 'climate security' invites international relation solutions to solve complex ecological disruptions and transformations (Steichen, 2019; McDonald, 2013). The criminalization of climate migrants and further securitization of borders are commonly cited concerns of the outcomes of climate security discourse (Walia, 2022).

C. The Evolution of Environmental Peacebuilding

While climate security emerged from the environment – conflict nexus in one direction, in the other direction emerged the field of environmental peacebuilding, in part as a reaction to the contested findings and methodological flaws of the conflict centered environmental security literature (Ide, 2021; Dresse et al., 2019). Environmental peacebuilding research challenges claims of environment – conflict causal linkages, while also recognizing that the environment and environmental factors have an interconnected relationship with both conflict dynamics and with peace processes (Simangan et al., 2022). Linkages between the environment and both negative and positive peace were emphasized as a direct response to the former dominant focus on the environment's hypothesized roles in the onset of armed conflict (Dresse et al., 2019; Brauch, 2009). Scholars claim that the environmental peacebuilding shift is

indicative of a broader transformation in international relations literature to avoid an "excess focus on conflict at the expense of peace research" (Ide et al., 2021).

Evolution of the field can be organized into three generations, the first of which was largely focused on transboundary water and conservation issues (Ide et al., 2021). Initially coined "environmental peacemaking" (Conca et al., 2002), the first generation focused on an international scale, mainly consisting of conservation areas or "peace parks" as tools for conflict resolution (Marton-Lafevre, 2007; Kemkar, 2006). In its infancy, "peacekeeping" relied in part on prior environment – conflict research, and was led mainly by multilateral organizations, including United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), national government agencies and NGOs (Kramp et al., 2021). Critics of conservation and peace park peacekeeping emerged swiftly, although more commonly found in later work, including the argument that peace parks extend state control rather than build peace through environmental dialogue, cooperation or management (Swatuk, 2021; Ide, et al., 2021).

The second generation of environmental peacebuilding emerged around 2010, with a particular focus on post-conflict environmental peacebuilding (Ide et al., 2021). The UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 was the catalyst for analyzing how the environment and natural resources related to post-conflict cycles of violence (Ide, 2017). In 2007, the UN Security Council debate on climate change and security was another catalyst for post-conflict peacebuilding development. Much of the current field focuses on regional, intrastate environmental peacebuilding (Dresse et al., 2019). This generation also facilitated what is known as "technical environmental peacebuilding" (Dresse et al., 2019; Carius, 2007; Ide, 2020) that encapsulates the methodological pursuits in response to criticism that the field lacked empirical evidence and was too "deductive and theory-driven" (Ide, 2020).

The current and third generation of "critical environmental peacebuilding" is multidisciplinary, spanning concerns, often focusing on the Global North — South power imbalances and divides (Mac Ginty, 2015) that influence systems of oppression and by extension, who controls natural resources (Peter 2018). Critical voices have gained further ground in the field, as several scholars argue that in practice, environmental peacebuilding is often technical and backed by multilateral organizations, ignoring unequal

power relations in conflict dynamics and peace processes (Ide et al., 2020). An increase in local resistance to international peacebuilding efforts that externally imposed norms and institutions have encouraged critical environmental peacebuilding to adapt to an inclusive approach to peace that centers grassroots leadership (Carius, 2007).

D. Theoretical Critique and Practical Initiatives

Critics of the field have argued that environmental peacebuilding scholarship is void of practical roots, and must be more specific to the area and nature of the conflict in which practices are implemented and where literature takes place (Ide, 2020). Mac Ginty This critique is largely accepted, as most critical environmental peacebuilding researchers and practitioners focus on one region or community as to avoid making broad generalizations of a field that is applied to often small-scale areas. The nature of this project and discussion however, is largely theoretical, and does make sweeping generalizations, and critiques, of the field. With this, the following list acknowledges the case by case and regional manner in which EP frequently operates. By no means is this an encompassing review of EP implementation on the ground, however, it serves to acknowledge and demonstrate theoretical placement of environmental peacebuilding that has regional practical and political consequences.

For the Middle East in the 1980's, heads of states aimed to integrate environmental cooperation into Israeli-Jordanian Picnic Table Talks (Jägerskog, 2003). EcoPeace, working in the Middle East is involved in these initiatives, aiming to promote peace between Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians by facilitating transnational water cooperation (Ide, 2015). For post conflict environmental peacebuilding in the early 2000's, marshland rehabilitation in the Iraqi marshlands enabled internally displaced populations re-settlement (Ide, 2015). In Africa and South Africa in the early 1990's, peace park projects were implemented, with much pushback, into Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Cason, 2003). Peace parks in these regions were most highly criticized for the exclusion of local decision making by state and business stakeholders, as well as little effective success in transforming peaceful international relations. More successful peacebuilding through conservation took place between DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in the Virunga region (Joseph et al., 2022). These projects are thought to have produced greater success

through conservation and peace benefits in areas of political instability. More recently, in the critical realm of environmental peacebuilding, dynamics of bottom-up EP among conflicting pastoral parties in Ghana and Kenya have taken place (Galaty, 2016).

In South Asia, climate change adaptation projects in Bangladesh and Nepal have contributed to the preservation of local ecosystems, livelihoods and political stability (Huq, 2017). Land reform provisions in post-civil war agreements in South Asia have been cited to increase prospects for peace (Ide, 2020). Additionally, in Nepal, UN backed support to female ex-combatants have aided for them to gain land rights (UNDP, 2013). In Central America, the western highlands of Guatemala have been host to initiatives by both communities and NGOs to adapt to climate change through improved local water management, natural resource conservation. These joint efforts have proved impactful on trust between various communities that have been divided by the civil war (Helen et al., 2018). Lastly, Europe is host to peacebuilding projects in Cyprus and Kosovo that focus on water cooperation across political boundaries. These projects have been cited to increase civil society cooperation through shared natural resources, however their long term success is unclear (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Critical Environmental Peacebuilding

The origins of mainstream environmental peacebuilding and its subdisciplines of environmental security are primarily led by white male Global North scholars, preoccupied with threats to conventional security and access to natural resources, largely surrounding the Global South (Environmental Peacebuilding Association, n.p.). Regarding the “third wave” of the critical EP movement, Randazzo et al. writes, “Critical perspectives have led the charge against a plethora of problematic practices and outcomes of foreign interventions, from unstable peace agreements, to local resistance, to frozen conflicts, and inorganic postwar statebuilding provisions that seem to be fundamentally at odds with the needs and wants of local populations at large” (Randazzo, 2021). The critical shift represents the recognition that mainstream peacebuilding has often failed to meaningfully engage with actual communities, minimizing

local resistance and failing to grasp the systemic roots of conflict and the realities of involved actors (Ide et al., 2021).

Indigenous people and other critical EP scholars refer to the need to shift environmental peacebuilding away from "big P" Peacebuilding, that is largely recognized to encompass mainstream EP, to "little p" peacebuilding (Indigenous Environmental Peacebuilding, 2022). Indigenous scholars and environmental activists remark that this would turn the literature away from mainstream peace parks and post-conflict UNEP peacebuilding assessments (Krampe, 2021), to what currently exists on the margins: the historical and relational human practice of environmental peacebuilding. While critical environmental peacebuilding research has produced a more nuanced understanding of the field by a growing diversity of scholars, few articles have shifted entirely to focus on the impacts of decolonization and demilitarization on the field. The following analysis will begin an explanation of these overlapping processes that inform EP, drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship from feminist theory, critical international and peace studies, as well as political ecology and environmental studies.

1. Critical Environmental Peacebuilding: Gender and Militarism

Militarism and gender share a complicated space with the environment and peace, that must be recognized and explored for just and successful environmental peacebuilding outcomes. Within critical environmental peacebuilding, little attention has been given directly to the gendered ways that militarization and militarism operate within the field. Achson et al writes, "Feminist analysis, along with disarmament and demilitarization, can broaden approaches to EP, while also making the interventions more sustainable" (Achson, 2021). Feminist international relations scholar Enloe continues, "we must talk about — monitor, explain, challenge — those multilayered processes by which militarism gains legitimacy and popular and elite acceptance; that is, we must learn how to track militarization" (Enloe, 2003). The military has been historically posed as a central actor in environmental peacebuilding processes, and has informed the discourse around climate security and much of the environment-conflict nexus. A few scholars argue that armed actors and the military ought to be a central part of environmental peacebuilding initiatives. Ali et al., writes, "No doubt the negative impact of militaries cannot be

underestimated or diminished. However, the opportunities to consider a positive transformative role for the military nevertheless deserves greater attention, given the enormous resource base of military establishments and continuing public investment in militaries worldwide (Ali et al., 2018). Scholars echo these claims that the military ought to be a central component of successful environmental peacebuilding. Particularly in the form of "green militarization" in which military actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships can be a core actor in peacebuilding initiatives (Durant, 2007).

However, there are dangers and inherent contradictions of militarizing environmental peacebuilding, particular in terms of gendered implications. A militarized approach to environmental peacebuilding is rooted within a patriarchal system that has legitimized military means as a central tool for resolving conflict (Sharoni, 2010). Brienes et al., writes, "It is most evident in the male leadership and domination of military and paramilitary state forces, but it is also inherent in the way security is conceptualized, the privilege given to the military by political systems, and the way military spending and responses is barely even questioned even when it is failing to deliver on its promises" (Brienes, 2000). Patriarchy underlies military and security structures, and crucially, undermines environmental peacebuilding's ability to shift from the climate conflict nexus and rhetoric of climate security to a more inclusive, critical and demilitarized way of conceptualizing EP.

Critical environmental peacebuilding scholars are increasingly coming to the consensus to affirm that the military industrial complex cannot be a partner in the battle against climate change in the effort to promote cooperation and relationship building around natural resources (Streichen et al., 2020; Shirazi 2021). Militaries in the Global North are among the greatest polluters and consumers of resources (Acheson et al., 2022). Acheson et al., continues, "Ever-increasing military expenditure also stands in stark contrast to the lack of investment in environmental protection and regeneration, social infrastructure and care, and conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Intersectional feminists call for inclusive and transparent decision-making, including effective participation of the most marginalized groups of society to advance social justice and peace" (Acheson et al., 2022).

This call comes in part from gendered implication of climate change, for women are disproportionately impacted by both climate change and armed conflict, as well as the militarized responses to the crises. The UN writes, “Climate change has a greater impact on those sections of the population, in all countries, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes. Women commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situations of poverty, and the majority of the world’s poor are women. Women’s unequal participation in decision-making processes and labor markets compound inequalities and often prevent women from fully contributing to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation (UN, n.d). As detailed, when women are systematically excluded from processes of decision-making, they are left more vulnerable to structural violence, including climate change and impacts from military intervention.

For critical environmental peacebuilding, women are best positioned to lead initiatives of cooperation surrounding the natural resources (Schilling et al., 2018). The military as an involved stakeholder often make this involvement inaccessible if not dangerous. The adverse impacts of the military on the environment are rooted in environmental injustice, and particularly impact women who have, throughout history, been on the forefront of efforts to combat environmental and health concerns, making all the more central a need for a feminist critique of mainstream environmental peacebuilding, climate security, the conflict-environment nexus, to elicit just, demilitarized solutions.

2. Critical Environmental Peacebuilding: A Decolonial Framework

Building off of the discussion of the complicated space that militarization and gender share with environmental peacebuilding, Indigenous voices are a central tenet of EP’s ability to operate equitably. Indigenous land stewardship centers Indigenous land practice and care, as a replacement for, and shift from, militarized climate rhetoric and militarization, with an emphasis on the systems of oppression, including colonization, that have shaped the current political and environmental world. Whyte writes on the intersection of colonialism and militarism, “Colonialism refers to a form of domination in which at least one society seeks to exploit some set of benefits believed to be found in the territory of one or more

other societies, from farm land to precious minerals to labor. Exploitation can occur through military invasion, slavery, and settlement" (Whyte, 2018). Although focused less explicitly in this project, colonialism has also paved the way for the expansion of capitalism.

Indigenous environmentalist and peace advocate work arises from memories, knowledge, histories, and experiences of oppression through colonization that differ from many of the mainstream EP researchers who are most prominent within the field (Whyte, 2018). Particularly in the field of international relations, critical peacebuilding, even with its "local turn" has largely overlooked both the theoretical and practical frameworks of Indigenous environmental stewardship and cooperation around shared natural resources. (Randazzo, et al, 2021). Promotion of "the local" and local agency is now often central in critical environmental peacebuilding scholarship, however there is still an omission of Indigenous perspectives, that fails to shift entirely from "big P" to "little p" peacebuilding. Randazzo et al. writes on the nuance of Indigenous knowledge co-optation within mainstream EP spaces, At first glance, interest in Indigenous experiences in theory does not appear to stand in opposition to the direction of policy-making amongst international organizations, which has, in recent times, also exhibited an emerging sensibility towards Indigenous communities and traditional knowledge. The United Nations has expressed its commitment to Indigeneity, particularly through the work of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Division for Social Development of Indigenous People. The European Union has also enshrined its commitment to Indigenous empowerment, mainly through the funding of projects which focus on sharing Indigenous knowledge to improve governance of conditions of poverty, conflict and environmental degradation" (Randazzo et al. 2021).

However, with further investigation, these commitments have done little to displace the core Euro-centrism and Western-centrism of narratives of environmental peace and conflict. Often, Indigenous perspectives are reduced down to "the local" and serve as both a victim and an idealized savior in peacebuilding processes (Ide, 2020). Mac Ginty continues, "The "local" is simultaneously held to blame for conflicts (as unenlightened, dangerous, uncivilized) and is also regarded as a savior for international peace support operations (Mac Ginty, 2015). So far, in the turn to critical EP, Indigenous knowledge has

not been systematically taken off the margins to occupy a central guiding force within the field. Discussion of “the local” and void commitments to Indigenous land stewardship within international politics does little to change this dynamic (Randazzo et al., 2021).

V. CONCLUSION

This project has aimed to provide a broad scope of environmental peacebuilding and its related fields of the environment – conflict nexus and climate security. This project claims that the militarized approach entrenched in many peacebuilding processes is rooted within a patriarchal system that has legitimized military means as a central tool for resolving conflict, and that the field must radically shift to a demilitarized and decolonized framework that prioritizes Indigenous land stewardship. Climate change is a global issue that must be met with appropriately scaled international solutions, and is best suited to international cooperation; the threat is borderless and ecologically nuanced, unlike any other international or national threat within the body of security discourse. As the global impacts of climate change are increasing, a turn from the environment – conflict nexus and climate security discourse to environmental cooperation as a source for relational environmental peacebuilding will inform just and sustainable international environmental policy decisions.

Environmental peacebuilding is a growing field with centuries of knowledge behind it, a fragmented theoretical past, and a promising future for thoughtful, collective human cooperation around the shared environment and its natural resources. Scholars in the field have echoed hope for the ability of EP to successfully shift focus from environmental conflict to processes of positive peace and the presence of justice. Scholars, practitioners and other engaged stakeholders cite new legal processes, growing diversity of ideas and actors, and an increased willingness to work together to innovate and learn in the face of climate disruption as indication of the field's continued and improved impact. The White Pages on Environmental Peacebuilding states, “With often similar root causes—including weak or corrupt institutions, discrimination, inequality, marginalization, over-exploitation—the converging crises of conflict and environmental degradation can be mutually reinforcing, with climate impacts potentially exacerbating the conflict cycle and violence weakening the institutions needed to build resilience.

Environmental peacebuilding can help us ensure a future that is more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable (Brown et al., 2021).

A. Paths Forward

With a feminist, decolonized and demilitarized lens, shortcomings within mainstream environmental peacebuilding can begin to be better addressed. Following are recommendations for critical environmental peacebuilding, inspired by a broad array of sources, from feminist scholars, to degrowth economic analysts, to Indigenous leaders, referenced against existing measures and initiatives in mainstream international relations and environmental policies organizations. For thousands of years, Indigenous communities have been stewards of their land in ways that foster human relationship building, connection, and peaceful cooperation over shared natural resources. While environmental peacebuilding is considered an exciting new place for international environmental interests, and in many ways is, the field must shift from multilateral organization backed initiatives to center Indigenous concerns over their land. Future research ought to identify ways in which this "little p" knowledge can be systemically embedded into environmental peacebuilding frameworks on all levels.

Along with Indigenous knowledge, EP must incorporate principles of environmental justice. The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 positioned themselves against military activities, stating in their principles, "Environmental Justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples, and cultures, and other life forms" (Principles of Environmental Justice, n.d.). Intersectional environmental principles stand in opposition to militarism, gendered harm and the process of colonialism that exist in EP today. As an extension of Indigenous best practices, environmental peacebuilding ought to also systematically incorporate environmental justice principles into environmental peacebuilding practices. This systematically will begin to address issues of militarization and colonialism that impede the field.

In this same vein, EP must prioritize women leadership. As historic leaders of both peace and climate movements around the world, women lead activism and the environment is rooted in addressing structural violence. Brown et al., writes, "This is evidenced by Indigenous women in Colombia whose

quest for reparative environmental justice broadens our notions of victimhood, and to women in the Pacific Islands whose views of security acknowledge the "slow violence" of rising sea levels and climate change as inseparable from the effects of militarism and colonialism" (Brown et al., 2022). The evolution of environmental peacebuilding as an inclusive framework has been driven as much by practice as it has been by theory and research. Yet, the field continues to focus on women as victims and passive targets for aid rather than as change-makers and knowledge-holders for building peace and addressing environmental harm. With the shift to relational, cooperative exchange surrounding shared resources, women and non-men will be pulled to the front of the field.

International intention is also a central tenant that must be better explored for successful and just critical environmental peacebuilding. Patriarchal, racially motivated and capitalist reasonings are rooted in imperial justification of exerting U.S. decision making or military force onto unconsenting foreign territory, even if framed with the good intention of environmental peacebuilding or supported broader peace processes. The international scale of environmental peacebuilding can garner widespread attention, scholarship and funding, however the scale, coupled with the inherent relational aspect of EP must be balanced to achieve just and secured results for all stakeholder. The international nature of the majority of environmental peacebuilding scholarship ought to lobby for the implementation of encompassing, binding international frameworks that will hold states, armed groups, and companies accountable for violent-conflict related environmental damage (Brown et al., 2022). The international nature must not, however, use power imbalances to its advantage as a means of exerting control or leadership (Enloe, 2003).

Along with international intention, degrowth economics and an analysis of the ways in which capitalism is intertwined with EP must take place. Although not the explicit focus of this independent study, the growth imperative of capitalism is the lead catalyst of environmental degradation and the climate crisis. To be systemically just and non-contradictory in its approach, environmental peacebuilding ought to incorporate critical recognition of all systems of oppression, including capitalism, for its sustainable and long term effectiveness. Acheson et al. writes, "The capitalist growth imperative,

perpetuated by militarization, is intrinsically colonial, requiring new frontiers from which to extract value, sustaining the dominance of the Global North over the Global South. The development and management of natural resources, such as timber, minerals, and oil, has been a focus of traditional EP, with resource revenues promoted to finance post-conflict recovery and the transition to peace. EP thus risks contributing to the unsustainable growth imperative that is driving environmental insecurity, making it incumbent on EP scholars and practitioners to address alternative models to endless growth" (Acheson et al.) Dismantling militarism and colonialism within the current field and shifting focus to a relational practice is inherently anti-capitalist.

Lastly, radical solutions and hope ought to be a focus moving forward for critical environmental peacebuilding. Equitable and effective climate action, of which environmental peacebuilding has the potential to be a part of, will require collective liberation, a demilitarized and decolonized framework and culture of care and radical hope. The environment – conflict nexus and the framing of climate change as a threat to global hegemony "securitizes" and defines an "enemy" and an "other" in a time where collective suffering must be met with increased international cooperation and care. Environmental peacebuilding represents a means of divesting from this narrative, and turning towards means of meeting global challenges with a just and sustainable framework.

VI. References

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