

## **Response to Karie Cross Riddle's Review of *Fixing Gender: The Paradoxical Politics of Training Peacekeepers***

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My sincere thanks to Karie Cross Riddle for her careful reading of *Fixing Gender*.

Although there are important differences in our work – Riddle herself focuses on grassroots women's peace politics, whereas I examine martial actors in institutions of state power – we share a foundational concern with how to do responsible feminist work. This concern extends, for each of us, from research ethics to questions about advocacy for a more peaceful and just world. I was thus heartened that Riddle engaged with *Fixing Gender* as a book that takes as its empirical site the question of peacekeeper training, but that is concerned with broader questions of feminist pedagogical strategizing.

Our shared interest in questions of feminist strategy prompt Riddle to think with my conclusion about how to work with the paradoxical politics of gender training. As she points out, my work contests that the only politically worthwhile actions are those intended to produce causal pathways to transformed futures, and draws attention instead to the importance of the everyday labour of contesting sexism, racism, and heterosexism as logics of meaning. This leads Riddle to ask the salient question of whether my findings would not still lend themselves to advocating for policy change at the international level, particularly in the realm of the international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

The invitation to revisit this conclusion is welcome, given how the political context has evolved since I wrote the book. The global rise of far-right politics has produced more explicit attacks on gender work, even in its least politicised institutional forms.

Feminists are thus confronted with difficult questions over whether to continue to invest in policies like WPS, or to pursue more radical systemic change. I stand by the conclusion that there remains value in different actors pursuing different kinds of political strategies – from mass protest to institutional reform – in the current political moment. We do not all have to invest our energies in the same mode of engagement.

The current Security Council, with resurgent anti-gender politics in Russia and the US, is unlikely to produce a new, let alone more progressive, resolution on WPS. Regardless, I believe in the importance of continuing pedagogic work across difference when it comes to the undecided middle. In polarising times, it is important to keep engaging and debating with actors who may not share (all) of our feminist commitments. My analysis of gender training, informed by postcolonial and queer scholarship, also helps make sense of why attacks on gender are occurring at the same time as attacks on racialised minorities, migrants, and sexual rights. Recognising that these are not isolated and separate incidents, but rather a manifestation of colonial ideas of racialised sexual difference, reveals the urgency of developing solidarity politics of resistance. Such resistance is crucial, but it is important not to limit our political imaginaries to the reactive mode. My account of subversive/resistant politics thus finds an important complement in more future-oriented work suffused with hope, like Riddle's own writing.