

Rethinking global nuclear politics, rethinking feminism

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The global nuclear order initiated by the US use of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945 has entered a period of renewed uncertainty and contestation in the past few years. Tensions have escalated between the United States and both Iran and North Korea as a changing cast of US administrations have tried to galvanize the international community to denuclearize these ‘illicit nuclear aspirants’.¹ In 2019, the United States also withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty ‘due to the Russian Federation’s continuing violation of the treaty’.² In 2021, Britain committed itself to a significant expansion of its nuclear arsenals and, with the United States, signed the AUKUS pact aimed at helping Australia put nuclear-powered submarines in the Pacific.³ Nuclear energy, with its umbilical connection to the stalled non-proliferation regime, has gained renewed attention in the context of the escalating climate emergency.⁴ At the same time, there has been a resurgence of anti-nuclear campaigning on the international stage, in the form of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the humanitarian initiative, culminating in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that entered into force on 22 January 2021.

At first glance, these developments might seem devoid of feminist interest—particularly since the high-profile, large-scale women’s and feminist mobilizations against nuclear weapons in the Cold War era have faded from memory.⁵ Yet

* This article is the introduction to a special section in the July 2022 issue of *International Affairs*, ‘Feminist interrogations of global nuclear politics’, guest-edited by the authors. We extend our heartfelt thanks to participants in the FemNukes network, to the International Studies Association for funding the initial series of workshops by the network in 2020, and to the anonymous reviewers of this essay. Catherine Eschle is the corresponding author.

¹ Patrick McEachern and Jaelyn O’Brien McEachern, *North Korea, Iran, and the challenge to international order: a comparative perspective* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), ch. 1.

² US Department of State, ‘US withdrawal from the INF Treaty on August 2, 2019’, press statement by Michael Pompeo, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/u-s-withdrawal-from-the-inf-treaty-on-august-2-2019/index.html>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 10 June 2022.)

³ HM Government, *Global Britain in a competitive age: the integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy*, March 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>; ‘Aukus: UK, US and Australia launch pact to counter China’, BBC News, 16 Sept. 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-58564837>.

⁴ ‘Global climate objectives fall short without nuclear power in the mix: UNECE’, UN News, 11 Aug. 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097572>.

⁵ See e.g. Louise Krasniewicz, *Nuclear summer: the clash of communities at the Seneca women’s peace encampment* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sasha Roseneil, *Common women, uncommon practices: the queer feminisms of Greenham* (London: Cassell, 2000); Alison Bartlett, ‘Feminist protest in the desert: research-

since then, feminist activists have continued to articulate critiques of the global nuclear order and join anti-nuclear struggles, organizing in alliance with other activists and affected communities at the gates of nuclear bases and reactor sites, against post-Cold War nuclear tests, and inside and outside the halls of the UN.⁶ Feminists played a significant role in the struggle for the TPNW, through the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and ICAN, ensuring that arguments about the gender-specific impact of ionizing radiation and the links between masculinity and nuclear status filtered into the negotiations.⁷ In parallel, high-level feminist or gender-centred foreign policy, diplomacy and security mechanisms in non-nuclear fields have gained momentum in recent years. The post-Cold War development of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been accompanied by a growing number of self-proclaimed feminist state leaders modelling new forms of explicitly feminist diplomatic and agenda-setting practices in an ever greater array of countries and fields of security. In this context, some scholars and decision-makers have collaborated to extend the WPS agenda to the field of nuclear proliferation and disarmament policy.⁸

Two conjoined puzzles emerge in the above picture. The more obvious one is the absence of sustained feminist academic engagement in the field of International Relations (IR) with developments in nuclear politics. High-profile feminist anti-nuclear mobilization was a formative influence on, and subject of some debate among, early feminist scholars in IR in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁹ However, there has been little further discussion of nuclear issues in and from feminist IR other than a small body of work on Indian nuclear tests and subsequent nuclear policy, most notably by Runa Das,¹⁰ and the occasional piece on

ing the 1983 Pine Gap women's peace camp', *Gender, Place and Culture* 20: 7, 2013, pp. 914–26; Kjølv Egeland, 'Who stole disarmament? History and nostalgia in nuclear abolition discourse', *International Affairs* 96: 5, 2020, pp. 1387–404.

⁶ See e.g. Runa Das, 'Broadening the security paradigm: Indian women, anti-nuclear activism, and visions of a sustainable future', *Women's Studies International Forum* 30: 1, 2007, pp. 1–15; Sylvia C. Frain, 'Women's resistance in the Marianas archipelago: a US colonial homefront and militarized frontline', *Feminist Formations* 29: 1, 2017, pp. 97–135; Catherine Eschle, 'Feminism and peace movements: engendering anti-nuclear activism', in Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Élise Féron and Catia Cecilia Confortini, eds, *Routledge handbook of feminist peace research* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 250–9.

⁷ See Ray Acheson, *Banning the bomb, smashing the patriarchy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

⁸ Toni Hastrup, Carina Minami, Marianna Muravyeva, Yasmeen Silva and Lovely Umayam, *Feminism, power and nuclear weapons: an eye on the P5* (Manchester: Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2020), <https://centreforforeignpolicy.org/feminism-power-and-nuclear-weapons-an-eye-on-the-p5>; Rosanagh Fuller, Robyn Harris and Marissa Conway, *Finding feminism in nuclear policy* (Manchester: Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 2021), <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/finding-feminism-in-nuclear-policy>; Henri Myrntinen, *Connecting the dots: arms control, disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security agenda* (New York: UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), 2020), <https://unidir.org/publication/connecting-dots>.

⁹ e.g. Cynthia Enloe, *The curious feminist: searching for women in a new age of empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 174; see also Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international politics*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014; first publ. 1989), pp. 170–3; Christine Sylvester, 'Feminists and realists view autonomy and obligation in International Relations', in V. Spike Peterson, ed., *Gendered states: Feminist (re)visions of International Relations theory*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992), pp. 155–77; Christine Sylvester, 'Some dangers in merging feminist and peace project', *Alternatives* 12: 4, 1987, pp. 493–509.

¹⁰ e.g. Das, 'Broadening the security paradigm'; Runa Das, 'Nation, gender and representations of (in)securities in Indian politics: secular-modernity and Hindutva ideology', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15: 3, 2008, pp. 203–21; Amrita Basu and Rekha Basu, 'Of men, women and bombs: engendering India's nuclear explosions', *Dissent* 46: 1, 1999, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/india-of-men-women-and-bombs>.

nuclear masculinities or feminist anti-nuclear activism in other contexts.¹¹ The most high-profile feminist academic analysis of nuclear politics in IR undoubtedly remains Carol Cohn's 1987 ground-breaking deconstruction of masculinity in the techno-strategic discourses of US nuclear elites.¹² The singular prominence of Cohn's article is testament to its resonance, but also to the lack of scholarly progress on nuclear politics in feminist IR in the ensuing decades.

This leads us to the second puzzle: where are the more diverse lineages of contributions to this topic in feminist IR? More specifically, where are the perspectives of women of colour and/or from the global South—not as 'native informants' or voices under analysis, but as theorists and researchers of global nuclear politics? Why isn't the work of Das, for instance, considered an appropriate starting-point for feminist interrogations of global nuclear politics in IR in the same way as that of Cohn? Or what about Teresia Teaiwa's analysis of how the bikini swimsuit simultaneously sexualizes the generic female body and erases the specificity of the embodied experience of nuclear colonialism by Pacific Island women?¹³ The fact that such works are so rarely centred in feminist IR leads us to wonder whether developments in feminist approaches to foreign policy, diplomacy and WPS have encouraged a focus on 'gender' abstracted from other power relations, and/or the elevation of Eurocentric dialogues on international norms and politics. Further adding to the puzzle is that while postcolonial feminist IR scholarship on war, militarism and security has been growing for some time,¹⁴ nuclear politics have not featured much, beyond the work of Das and Teaiwa. Conversely, postcolonial IR scholarship on the ways in which nuclear diplomacy is shaped by colonial legacies and racialized hierarchies is now well established,¹⁵ but it leaves uninterrogated the 'global masculinity game' that 'transnationalizes

¹¹ Claire Duncanson and Catherine Eschle, 'Gender and the nuclear weapons state: a feminist critique of the UK government's white paper on Trident', *New Political Science* 30: 4, 2008, pp. 545–63; Claire Duncanson and Catherine Eschle, 'Bombs, Brexit boys and bairns: a feminist critique of nuclear (in)security in the Integrated Review', BASIC, 2021, <https://basicint.org/bombs-brexit-boys-and-bairns-a-feminist-critique-of-nuclear-insecurity-in-the-integrated-review/>; Catherine Eschle, 'Gender and the subject of (anti)nuclear politics: revisiting women's campaigning against the bomb', *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 4, 2013, pp. 713–24; Catherine Eschle, 'Nuclear (in)security in the everyday: peace campers as everyday security practitioners', *Security Dialogue* 49: 4, 2018, pp. 289–305.

¹² Carol Cohn, 'Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals', *Signs* 12: 4, 1987, pp. 687–718.

¹³ Teaiwa's 'bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans' (*Contemporary Pacific* 6: 1, 1994, pp. 87–109) remains a touchstone for feminists working on nuclear colonialism in the region but is rarely referenced in IR. It has recently been republished in the posthumous collection *Sweat and salt water: selected works*, collated and edited by Katerina Teaiwa, April K. Henderson and Terence Wesley-Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), pp. 110–26. See also Teresia Teaiwa and Claire Slatter on the marginality of Pacific voices in feminist IR, in "'Samting Nating": Pacific waves at the margins of feminist security studies', *International Studies Perspectives* 14: 4, 2013, pp. 447–50.

¹⁴ See e.g. Geeta Chowdhury and Sheila Nair, *Power, postcolonialism and International Relations: reading race, gender and class* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2002); Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, 'The house of IR: from family power politics to the poisons of worldism', *International Studies Review* 6: 4, 2004, pp. 21–49; Swati Parashar, 'Feminism and postcolonialism: (en)gendering encounters', *Postcolonial Studies* 19: 4, 2016, pp. 371–7.

¹⁵ See e.g. Itty Abraham, ed., *South Asian cultures of the bomb: atomic publics and the state in India and Pakistan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Shampa Biswas, *Nuclear desire: power and the postcolonial nuclear order* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014); Kab-woo Koo, 'For a rogue state to have its say: international politics of North Korean nuclear discourse', *Journal of Korean Social Trends and Perspectives* 2, 2017, pp. 83–121 (in Korean); Ritu Mathur, *Civilizational discourses in weapons control* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

insecurity supposedly to protect the “homeland” and ensures ‘brutal expressions of hegemony through technological efficiency’.¹⁶ Thus, with a few notable exceptions, feminist and postcolonial IR have tended to talk past each other on the topic of global nuclear politics.¹⁷

In response, this article argues that feminist IR scholarship on the global nuclear order and its discontents should be revitalized, in ways that take fuller account of the colonial matrix of power, its racialized underpinnings and its contemporary realignments. Coloniality, defined succinctly by Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh as a colonial matrix of power that is constitutive of modernity,¹⁸ has not yet become a substantial foundational starting-point for conversations in feminist IR, except as a specialism for some.¹⁹ If feminists are fully to understand its implications for global nuclear politics, critical conversations will have to take place across theoretical traditions and disciplines, as well as across geopolitical locations and experiences of different forms of colonialism. This will require the provincializing of western nuclear experiences and discourses, along with the development of location-sensitive, non-totalizing and non-hierarchical understandings of how coloniality has shaped and continues to shape the global nuclear order in gendered and racialized ways. The articles in the special section of this issue of *International Affairs* are an important step in this direction.

In the first part of this introductory article, we point to some of the distinctive insights into global nuclear politics that could be generated by a feminist approach that takes coloniality seriously. We show how such an approach reconceptualizes nuclear destruction as a lived reality for many, within a broader history of domination; exposes the racialized, gendered and colonial dimensions of nuclear discourses; and casts fresh light on the material colonial relationships at the heart of the global nuclear order. In the second part, we reverse our focus to explore how the content of feminism, and its understanding of colonialism and struggles for self-determination, might be understood differently if we start from a concern with global nuclear politics. Together, these two sections show how a feminist reckoning with colonial logics and politics is necessary for a fully critical, holistic understanding of the global nuclear order, and for challenging it more effectively. While we recognize that the work of knitting together feminism and critical insights on coloniality in feminist IR is variously under way, the third and

¹⁶ Agathangelou and Ling, ‘The house of IR’, pp. 35, 36.

¹⁷ We are not positing that feminism is essentially about ‘gender’, and postcolonialism about ‘race’, but suggesting that they have been mapped this way since they emerged in IR and thus often set on different tracks. For characterizations of feminist scholarship in this vein, see the works cited in n. 9 above. On race and postcolonial IR, see Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Robbie Shilliam, eds, *Race and racism in International Relations: confronting the global colour line* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); also the recent special issue of *International Affairs* on ‘Race and imperialism in international relations: theory and practice’, 98: 1, 2022, edited by Jasmine K. Gani and Jenna Marshall.

¹⁸ Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). See also Olivia U. Rutazibwa, ‘Hidden in plain sight: coloniality, capitalism, and race/ism as far as the eye can see’, *Millennium* 48: 2, 2021, pp. 221–41; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples*, 2nd edn (Dunedin, New Zealand and London: Otago University Press and Zed, 2012); Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as method: toward deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹⁹ Navnita Chadha Behera, ‘Globalization, deglobalization and knowledge production’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1579–97.

final part of the article surveys the steps taken towards this goal in the articles in the special section, highlighting some of the cross-cutting themes and sketching out some lines of enquiry for future research.

Rethinking global nuclear politics

What might a feminist approach that takes coloniality seriously reveal about global nuclear politics? To help us answer that question, we draw from diverse sources, not only on postcolonial theorizing in IR but also on decolonial thought;²⁰ on nuclear imperialism and colonialism;²¹ on critical literary, area, and race and ethnic studies;²² and on Indigenous studies and perspectives.²³

We begin with what seems the most obviously striking characteristic of nuclear technologies and particularly nuclear weapons—their destructiveness. A feminist approach reframes our understanding of that destructiveness in two ways. On the one hand, it leads us to reconceptualize the temporality of destruction, which dominant discourses contain in the long-since past of the Second World War, or within a speculative future.²⁴ Nuclear apocalypse is, rather, a lived reality of the contemporary global order, experienced daily by communities who live with the consequences of each stage of the ‘nuclear fuel chain’—the mining, processing, storage and waste disposal of radioactive materials— and of the testing of nuclear bombs. As Māori campaigner Titewhai Harawira put it in 1985 when describing the experiences of Indigenous people across the Pacific region, this is ‘a nuclear war that we’ve been forced to live in for forty years’.²⁵ Those targeted in this war—‘radiogenic communities’, as Barbara Rose Johnston has described them²⁶—have been ‘selected because of their subaltern status. This was the result of their

²⁰ On the convergences and divergences between postcolonial and decolonial thinking, see Sara de Jong, ‘Writing rights: suturing Spivak’s postcolonial and de Sousa Santos’ decolonial thought’, *Postcolonial Studies* 25: 1, 2022, pp. 89–107. For a decolonial feminist approach to gender, see Maria Lugones, ‘Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system’, *Hypatia* 22: 1, 2007, pp. 186–209.

²¹ e.g. Ward Churchill and Winona LaDuke, ‘Native North America: the political economy of radioactive colonization’, in Annette Jaimes, ed., *The state of Native America: genocide, colonization and resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1992); Danielle Endres, ‘The rhetoric of nuclear colonialism: rhetorical exclusion of American Indian arguments in the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste siting decision’, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6: 1, 2009, pp. 39–60; Anaïs Maurer and Rebecca H. Hogue, ‘Special forum introduction: transnational nuclear imperialisms’, *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 11: 2, 2020, pp. 153–71.

²² The literature in this vein with which we are familiar is on the Asia and Pacific regions includes the following works: Christine Hong, *A violent peace: race, US militarism and cultures of democratization in Cold War Asia and the Pacific* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020); Teaiwa, *Sweat and salt water*; Yu-Fang Cho, ‘Remembering Lucky Dragon, re-membering Bikini: worlding the Anthropocene through transpacific nuclear modernity’, *Cultural Studies* 33: 1, 2019, pp. 122–46; Rebecca H. Hogue, ‘Nuclear normalizing and Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s “Dome Poem”’, *Amerasia Journal* 47: 2, 2021, pp. 208–29.

²³ e.g. Churchill and LaDuke, ‘Native North America’; Tiara Na’Puti, ‘Mariana Islands and Okinawa solidarity against militarism’, unpublished online presentation to FemNukes network, 1 March 2020; Talei Lucia Mangioni, ‘Reflections from the #PalauFieldSchool2019: a visual essay’, *New Outrigger*, 14 Aug. 2019, <https://thenewoutrigger.com.wordpress.com/2019/08/14/reflections-from-the-palaufieldschool2019-a-visual-essay/>; Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (WWNFIP), *Pacific women speak: why haven’t you heard?* (Oxford: Greenline, 1987).

²⁴ Maurer and Hogue, ‘Special forum introduction’, p. 28.

²⁵ WWNFIP, *Pacific women speak*, p. 34.

²⁶ Barbara Rose Johnston, ‘Half lives, half truths, and other radioactive legacies of the Cold War’, in Barbara Rose Johnston, ed., *Half lives and half truths: confronting the radioactive legacies of the Cold War* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), p. 2.

race, their socio-economic status, and their location at the peripheries of what was defined as *civilization*.²⁷ As a result, such communities suffer health impacts passed down through generations, in part through the damage caused by ionizing radiation to women's reproductive systems and hence to their children.²⁸ Moreover, the land which radiogenic communities call home has also been targeted for nuclear destruction, not just for occupation but often for physical annihilation, through the 'largescale terra-deforming, excavating, biociding, mining, transporting, detonating, stockpiling, and waste disseminating and disposing associated with nuclear energies and weaponry'.²⁹ We might thus interpret nuclear technologies as a key instrument of modern 'necropolitics', in which sovereignty is articulated through ongoing, deathly violence against a racialized other and the Earth itself.³⁰

On the other hand, a feminist approach that takes coloniality seriously should also question the commonplace assumption that nuclear technologies are uniquely destructive. Shampa Biswas has argued that the routine separation of nuclear weapons 'from the category of "normal", that is, "conventional weapons"', functions to fetishize the former, disguising their materiality and removing them from their embeddedness in social, cultural, and economic networks and relations'.³¹ We are reminded by Biswas, and other feminist and postcolonial scholars who make gender, race and coloniality their foci, that nuclear weapons are sustained by broader processes of necropolitical war-making, militarism and politics that normalize violence against those who can be marked as subhuman, surplus and other.³² In this way, nuclear weapons are returned from the realm of the exceptional to the mundane, and to the political. Moreover, if we pay attention to the view from the radiogenic communities most affected by nuclear politics, we are reminded that the destructive impacts of nuclear weapons and the nuclear fuel chain compose just one moving part in a series of catastrophes inflicted by coloniality.³³ From this perspective, it becomes difficult and indeed

²⁷ Robert Jacobs, 'Nuclear conquistadors: military colonialism in nuclear test site selection during the Cold War', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 1: 2, 2013, p. 173 (emphasis in original); see also Gabrielle Hecht, *Being nuclear: Africans and the global uranium trade* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

²⁸ See testimonies by Darlene Keju-Johnson and Lijon Eknilang, both of the Marshall Islands, in WWNFIP, *Pacific women speak*; also John Borrie, Anne Guro Dimmen, Torbjørn Graff Hugo, Camilla Waszink and Kjølvi Egeland, *Gender, development and nuclear weapons: shared goals, shared concerns*, International Law and Policy Institute and UNIDIR, 2016, <https://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/gender-development-and-nuclear-weapons-en-659.pdf>.

²⁹ Maurer and Hogue, 'Special forum introduction', p. 33.

³⁰ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Becky Alexis-Martin, 'The nuclear imperialism–necropolitics nexus: contextualizing Chinese–Uyghur oppression in our nuclear age', *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 60: 2, 2019, pp. 152–76; Hong, *A violent peace*, ch. 4; Yu-Fang Cho, 'Remembering Lucky Dragon'; Yu-Fang Cho, 'Nuclear diffusion', *Amerasia Journal* 41: 3, 2015, pp. 1–24.

³¹ Biswas, *Nuclear desire*, p. 131; on nuclear fetishes, see also Teaiwa, 'bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans'; Anne Harrington de Santana, 'Nuclear weapons as the currency of power', *Nonproliferation Review* 16: 3, 2009, pp. 325–45.

³² e.g. Melanie Richer-Montpetit, 'Empire, desire and violence: a queer transnational feminist reading of the prisoner "abuse" in Abu Ghraib and the question of "gender equality"', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9: 1, 2007, pp. 38–59; Swati Parashar, 'What wars and "war bodies" know about international relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26: 4, 2013, pp. 615–30; Sylvia C. Frain, 'A defence democracy "in" the United States: gender and politics in the unincorporated territory of Guam', *Small States and Territories* 3: 2, 2020, pp. 319–38; Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Élise Féron and Catia Cecilia Confortini, eds, *Routledge handbook of feminist peace research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

³³ We thank Anaïs Maurer and Rebecca Hogue for this point. Taking it seriously means recontextualizing

undesirable to separate out the nuclear issue from the broader challenges facing the people entangled in these specific locations, and correspondingly to separate out anti-nuclear struggles from other demands for justice and self-determination.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that there is no one homogeneous category of radiogenic community, or of colonized peoples, which allows easy analogous comparisons among them as nuclear victims. For instance, peoples still struggling for self-determination and self-governance—such as the Indigenous communities in the occupied territories of Hawai'i, Guam/Guahan and the Marshall Islands; First Nations and Aboriginal peoples; or Uyghur communities—experience nuclear impacts today differently from those in postcolonial states and their diaspora who achieved political independence through the decolonization that started in the middle of the twentieth century.³⁴ Indeed, the discourse of nuclear victimization can get in the way of criticizing the specificity of political structures underpinning experiences of victimhood, that is, of how the colonial matrix of power plays out in different contexts, shaped by different global and local histories. Christine Hong's critical analysis of the case of Japanese *hibakusha* (victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in relation to US empire secured by its military force in the Pacific is illustrative.³⁵ Works like Hong's show us how feminist interrogations need to be attentive to the connections and disconnections between locations that arise as a result of the colonial matrix of power. As a further example, we note the 'transoceanic fluidarity' of the movement for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific,³⁶ which emerged from a conference in Suva, Fiji, in 1975, and was for many years an umbrella for struggles against nuclear testing and dumping, and for self-determination, across Pacific island communities.³⁷ We note also the relative disconnection of Mā'ohi Nui communities fighting French nuclear testing from this network and subsequent regional initiatives.³⁸

Feminist understandings of the destructive impacts of nuclear technologies gain depth when we further contextualize them in relation to feminist interrogations of the discursive dimensions of nuclear politics, and particularly the gendered, racialized and colonial tropes that render nuclear destruction sayable and doable. On this point, the feminist critique of what has been called 'nukespeak', involving

nuclear politics not only in a much longer history of the colonial encounter, but also in a much broader framing of crisis, including climate change and the deep time of the Anthropocene. For one effort to think about nuclear weapons through the lens of the Anthropocene, see Rens van Munster, 'The nuclear origins of the Anthropocene', in David Chandler, Franziska Müller and Delf Rothe, eds, *International Relations in the Anthropocene* (Cham: Springer, 2021), pp. 59–75. We thank Anna Weichselbraun for her suggested alternative feminist starting-points, such as Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: black feminist lessons from marine mammals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020); or Richard Grusin, ed., *Anthropocene feminism* (St Paul, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

³⁴ We thank the anonymous reviewer for helping us foreground this point.

³⁵ Hong, *A violent peace*, ch. 4.

³⁶ Sylvia Frain, following Teaiwa, explains why 'transoceanic fluidarity' is a more appropriate term than transnational solidarity in the Pacific in 'Women's resistance in the Marianas archipelago', p. 100.

³⁷ See e.g. Roy Smith, *The Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement: after Mururoa* (London: Tauris, 1997). We are grateful to Claire Slatter and Vanessa Griffen for their online presentations on feminist involvement in the movement for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, and the legacies of the movement to the FemNukes network, 8–9 Feb. 2020.

³⁸ Thanks to Vanessa Griffen and Anaïs Maurer for this point.

the use of ‘abstractions, technical jargon, acronyms, metaphors, playful euphemisms, meaning-laden weapons names and titles, and the wide use of passive voice’,³⁹ is already well known. As articulated in Cohn’s pioneering analysis, the discursive mechanisms of nukespeak delegitimize ‘the emotional, the concrete, the particular, human bodies and their vulnerability, human lives and their subjectivity—all of which are marked as feminine in the binary dichotomies of gender discourse’ and thus become unsayable within the dominant frameworks for discussing nuclear weapons.⁴⁰ Other feminists have integrated postcolonial insights to show how these gendered discursive dichotomies are overlain with an Orientalist imaginary, which enables the representation of states in the global South, especially those contesting or attempting to join the nuclear hierarchy, as feminized, irrational and immature.⁴¹

Or take ‘nuclear deterrence’, the notion that the utility of nuclear weapons lies not in their use in war but in the credible threat of their use and capacity to deter aggression from others. Deterrence discourse is propounded by advocates as guaranteeing not only the national security of states that possess nuclear weapons but also world peace. From the vantage-point of the kind of feminist perspective we advocate here, deterrence is not only narrowly reliant on masculinist rationality in its interpretation of state motivation, but also a topsy-turvy doctrine in which weapons of mass destruction wielded by the most powerful states are positioned as essential to peace, civilian populations kept in a state of terror, and the boundary between war and peace thoroughly blurred.⁴² Finally, what about ‘nuclearism’, which legitimates ‘the entire complex of nuclear weapons testing, research and development, production, stockpiling, and waste disposal from nuclear weapons development and nuclear power plants’,⁴³ through a multi-pronged faith in and desire for nuclear technologies?⁴⁴ We learn from scholarship that begins with the colonial matrix of power and the empire-making politics of states such as the US and France that the desirability of nuclear technologies for states in the global South is linked to reactive modernization, ‘catching up’ and redressing the colonial wound of humiliation, all variously linked to nationalist projects.⁴⁵ For imperial powers, this desirability is linked to securing ‘prestige’ and ‘grandeur through nuclear and other technologies’ in the face of either waning imperial ‘radiance’ (in the case of France), or assertion as a new imperial power (in the case of the US).⁴⁶ Nuclearism’s

³⁹ Biswas, *Nuclear desire*, p. 122.

⁴⁰ Carol Cohn, Felicity Hill and Sara Ruddick, ‘The relevance of gender for eliminating weapons of mass destruction’, *Disarmament Diplomacy*, no. 80, 2005, <http://www.acronym.org.uk/old/archive/dd/dd80/80ccfhsr.htm>.

⁴¹ e.g. Runa Das, ‘A post-colonial analysis of India–United States nuclear security: Orientalism, discourse, and identity in International Relations’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52: 6, 2015, pp. 741–59.

⁴² Rey Chow, *The age of the world target: self-referentiality in war, theory and comparative work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 31–2; Acheson, *Banning the bomb*, pp. 10–11.

⁴³ Valerie L. Kuletz, *The tainted desert: environmental and social ruin in the American West* (New York and London: Routledge), p. 291, note 1.

⁴⁴ The role of nuclear power in sustaining nuclearism because it is perceived as ‘consecrated to ... life’ is emphasized in Hong, *A violent peace*, p. 113 (citing Dwight Eisenhower); see also Columba Peoples, ‘Redemption and utopia: the scope of nuclear critique in international studies’, *Millennium* 44: 2, 2015, pp. 216–35.

⁴⁵ E.g. Abraham, ed., *South Asian cultures of the bomb*; Das, ‘Broadening the security paradigm’; Das, ‘Nation, gender and representations of (in)securities in Indian politics’.

⁴⁶ Roxanne Panchasi, ‘“No Hiroshima in Africa”: the Algerian War and the question of French nuclear tests

discursive connection to colonial and postcolonial identity constructions also has gendered dimensions. Anaïs Maurer, for example, has shown how French nuclear adventurism in the Pacific has leant heavily on stereotyped imagery of the sexuality and bodies of Indigenous Pacific islander women, rooted in the symbolic economy of past colonial exploration and the myth of the South Seas paradise, while also obscuring the impact of nuclear testing on actual women's bodies.⁴⁷

As Maurer's work indicates, simply studying discourse on its own is insufficient for a feminist approach that takes coloniality seriously. This takes us to the final theme we want to explore in this section: how feminist IR must also attend to the ways in which nuclear technologies are dependent on and help to sustain the material relations of colonial and postcolonial power arrangements. One way to do so would be to engage with the literature on 'nuclear colonialism'. This concept, which emerged from Indigenous studies, indicates 'a system of domination through which governments and corporations disproportionately target and devastate indigenous peoples and their lands to maintain the nuclear production process'.⁴⁸ According to its critics, nuclear colonialism is pursued internally, within nuclear states, as well as externally; relies on the continued control of territory; and is underpinned by a racist imaginary that positions subaltern, non-white and especially Indigenous communities as invisible and/or disposable.⁴⁹ Taking this analytic seriously would push feminist scholars to contextualize their accounts of nuclear discourses in global processes of dispossession and the use of force at the root of supposedly rule-based political relations.

To help with this task, we can draw in addition on a body of critical feminist research that brings coloniality to centre stage when explaining the militarism and war theatre of nuclear powers in the Pacific and beyond.⁵⁰ Across regions and despite a changing cast of testing states in lands that are not their own, in deserts, oceans and skies deemed *terra nullius*, nuclear powers have effectively pursued nuclear testing in the Pacific as a form of neo-colonial war in the post-Cold War era, with the enforced participation of people in both colonized territories and postcolonial states.⁵¹ Feminist research into this phenomenon has revealed, for example, how US military bases within US states or territories (Hawai'i, Guam) or supposedly independent territories or states (Okinawa, South Korea, the Philip-

in the Sahara', *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 9: 1, 2019, p. 88. See also Gabrielle Hecht, *The radiance of France: nuclear power and national identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Chow, *The age of the world target*; Hong, *A violent peace*.

⁴⁷ Anaïs Maurer, 'Nukes and nudes: counter-hegemonic identities in the nuclearized Pacific', *French Studies* 72: 3, 2018, pp. 394–411; see also Frain, 'Women's resistance in the Marianas archipelago'; Teaiwa, 'bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans'.

⁴⁸ Endres, 'The rhetoric of nuclear colonialism', p. 39; see also Churchill and LaDuke, 'Native North America'; Maurer and Hogue, 'Special forum introduction'. Note that Maurer and Hogue prefer the term 'nuclear imperialisms', a preference we will explain below when discussing their contribution to this special section.

⁴⁹ e.g. Fiona Amundsen and Sylvia C. Frain, 'The politics of invisibility: visualizing legacies of nuclear imperialisms', *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 11: 2, 2020, pp. 125–51; Anne Sisson Runyan, 'Disposable waste, lands and bodies under Canada's gendered nuclear colonialism', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20: 1, 2018, pp. 24–38.

⁵⁰ Christine Hong, 'The unending Korean war', *Positions* 23: 4, 2015, pp. 597–617; Christine Hong and Hazel Smith, eds, *Critical Asian Studies*, special issue on 'Reframing North Korean human rights', 45: 4, 2013, and 46: 1, 2014.

⁵¹ Panchasi, "'No Hiroshima in Africa'", pp. 97–103.

pires) produce analogous effects on local women, whether they are at home or travelling through the corridors these bases create.⁵² The violence and terror inflicted on these women's lives, and their claims to life beyond coloniality, need to be understood in the context of neo-colonial dispossession that rids them of a language in which to assert self-determination. Importantly, such a language would also have to exceed racialized and gendered categories. After all, 'gender', 'race' and even sexuality among others are colonial categories that need to undergo decolonial delinking.⁵³

Trinh T. Minh-Ha's creative theoretical intervention on US wars, *Lovecidal: walking with the disappeared*, helps us crystallize the argument we are building in this section.⁵⁴ A film-maker and theorist, Trinh pieces together and pulls apart the discourses from US-led wars—Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, the 'war on terror'—to map out 'the profoundly unsettling nooks and corners in the netherworld of consciousness' in the war story, in order to get to what is actually going on and accomplished through wars.⁵⁵ One of her bricolages, which is Trinh's main method of working with texts, helps to flip on their head the assumptions about nuclear politics and their relation to militarism that have run through this article thus far:

Compelled to reassure their citizens about the legality of their own spying activities when given access to information collected by Washington, they [US allies] are also left in deep quandary about American global power politics in what Germany's liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* considers 'the worst imaginable nuclear accident for legality and Atlanticism'.⁵⁶

Rather than enquiring into how nuclear weapons perpetuate war and militarism, or vice versa, this almost accidental appearance of nuclear imagery in Trinh's rendering of the 'war on terror' discourse shows us that nuclear weapons (like the multiple and ongoing US-led wars) are a symptom of 'the profound crisis of our civilization—a crisis far more dangerous than the nuke nightmare itself—[in which] *man forgets to be man* ... one finds oneself living by one's shadow, hiding and drifting dazed as one witnesses one's own participation in the darkest side of humanity's inhumanity'.⁵⁷ Trinh is here pointing to the cruelty that underlies power politics, and to power politics not as the cause of war but *as* war. Her kind of creative, holistic approach to studying politics, history and war reminds feminist and postcolonial enquiries to stay attuned to this deeper crisis in political consciousness. In other words, although mapping imperial government activities, corporate and institutionalized forms of power, and the colonial logics under-

⁵² Sealing Cheng, *On the move for love: migrant entertainers and the US military in South Korea* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, eds, *Over there: living with the US military empire from World War Two to the present* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Jeehey Kim, 'Wandering ghosts of the Cold War: military sex workers in the film *Tour of Duty* (*Kōmi ūi ttang*)', *Journal of Korean Studies* 22: 2, 2017, pp. 413–31.

⁵³ On decoloniality as a process of delinking, see Mignolo and Walsh, *On decoloniality*. On the colonial character of gender, see, e.g. Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system'.

⁵⁴ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Lovecidal: walking with the disappeared* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

⁵⁵ Trinh, *Lovecidal*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Trinh, *Lovecidal*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Trinh, *Lovecidal*, p. 3, emphasis in original.

pinning them, might tell us what is occurring in plain sight, Trinh's exploration encourages us to search for what lies beyond existing stories or official documents, undetectable to the eye, and thus to move towards the darkest 'nooks and corners in the netherworld of consciousness'.

Rethinking feminism

Thus far we have been urging feminists in IR to draw together insights on coloniality from postcolonial, decolonial, Indigenous and other critical traditions of thought, as if such a move were unproblematic. This is far from the case. In order to expose some of the lines of tension between bodies of theory and praxis that focus on coloniality and dominant traditions of feminism, in this section we invert our focus and think about how we might reframe feminism when we approach it through the lens of global nuclear politics.

Consider, for example, Haunani-Kay Trask's analysis of the situation of Hawaiian women.⁵⁸ Trask characterizes the United States, France and, latently, Japan, together with multinational corporations, as still-strong colonizers in the Pacific (with British decline explaining the 'nominal' sovereignty of former British possessions in the Pacific). For Trask, Hawai'i has been both colonized by the United States and also nuclearized, functioning as the nuclear command centre in the Pacific for the US; but the political struggle for self-determination has been hard to build, not least because the US denies it is a colonial power. Trask argues that nuclearization is an interconnected political issue for the region that should unite Pacific islanders. In this context, however, feminism as expressed in the 'global women's movement' is an affront to solidarity, dominated as it is by white, western feminist issues that eclipse the priorities of Hawaiian women, and indeed mask the insidious colonialism of the US and other western powers. Thus Trask asks of feminists in the US in the early 1990s:

If Pacific Island women, and particularly Hawaiian women, live in a white- and Japanese-dominated Pacific, why should we care about whether women are running for president of the occupying country responsible for our degradation? Indeed, why should we make common cause with white feminist issues when our cultural base, the land, is slowly being annihilated by the bulldozer or the warship or the nuclear cloud?⁵⁹

Trask elsewhere concludes that 'First World feminist theory is incapable of addressing indigenous women's cultural worlds. How could it be otherwise?'.⁶⁰ Notably her work is published in an edited volume *Sing, whisper, shout, pray! Feminist visions for a just world* of over 600 pages, edited by a US-based multiracial

⁵⁸ Haunani-Kay Trask, 'Self-determination for Pacific island women: the case of Hawai'i', in M. Jacqui Alexander, Lisa Albrecht, Sharon Day and Mab Segrest, eds, *Sing, whisper, shout, pray! Feminist visions for a just world* (Fort Bragg: EdgeWork Books, 2003), pp. 138–50.

⁵⁹ Trask, 'Self-determination for Pacific island women', p. 143.

⁶⁰ Trask, 'Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian nationalism', *Signs* 21: 4, 1996, p. 910. This perception is not unique to Hawai'i and has not receded in the intervening years; see e.g. Sylvia Frain's argument about how Chamoru women scholars in the northern Marianas have articulated feminism(s) 'grounded in their maternal indigenous heritage', in opposition to feminism from the 'imperial center' ('Women's resistance in the Marianas archipelago', p. 106).

editorial team: M. Jacqui Alexander, Lisa Albrecht, Sharon Day and Mab Segrest. The volume was commissioned as a follow-up to the now classic *This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color*, and was a collaboration that ‘began in 1987, [was] completed for the first time in 1993, and revised in 2000–2002’.⁶¹ In other words, this is a feminist conversation in book form that is hard to imagine in today’s research publication culture—and yet Trask’s affronted questions go unanswered even here.

Such questions should be asked not only of ‘global feminism’ but also of feminism in IR and its complex relationship to coloniality. Postcolonial and decolonial critiques continue to be relatively marginal within the mainstream of a feminist IR that considers itself primarily about gender, even as researchers recognize and variously attempt to examine how power and marginalization work inescapably through intersections of gender with other categories.⁶² As a field, feminist IR remains primarily located within the ‘belly of the beast’, where the possession of nuclear weapons has been largely naturalized. A related point is that voices and perspectives from groups and regions whose daily lives are shaped by nuclear tensions and by the legacies of nuclear mining, testing and waste dumping, are rarely brought to the fore.⁶³ Nor do the contradictions between postcolonial locations gain articulation within feminist methods unless pushed by individual women of colour feminists against strong headwinds, often in workshop and planning environments, where their full significance is perceptible only for those already attuned to the possibility. Just as in the case of Trask’s essay in *Sing, whisper, shout, pray!*, specific articulations of needs are frequently left unheard and unanswered. When such articulations are heard, they are often interpreted as specifically *postcolonial* feminist insights rather than feminist *per se*—as local, regional, partial and peripheral, from ‘over there’, rather than a central ingredient in the pot of ideas, analytics, lines of argumentation, historical facts that constitute feminist IR, ‘over here’. This keeps our understanding of humanity and human agency centred on the colonial core, while erasing the amount of labour that goes into keeping it there. What happens to feminist IR insights, methods and praxis when we start with a curiosity about how the centre is maintained? To paraphrase Trask, why should postcolonial/women of colour/Indigenous feminists who research or campaign on nuclear politics make common cause with white feminist IR and security studies? These concerns are sidelined by the ways in which feminist IR analytics mimic the colonial lines of vision in IR, and thus structure out the possibility of productive dialogue across differences.

⁶¹ M. Jacqui Alexander, Lisa Albrecht, Sharon Day, and Mab Segrest, ‘Introduction’, in Alexander et al., eds, *Sing, whisper, shout, pray!*, p. xxviii.

⁶² See works cited in n. 21 above.

⁶³ e.g. Shine Choi, ‘Redressing international problems: North Korean nuclear politics’, *Review of International Studies* 46: 3, 2020, pp. 337–49; Christine Ahn, ‘Christine Ahn, in her own words’, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, 29 Nov. 2018, <https://www.wagingpeace.org/christine-ahn-in-her-own-words/>; Teaiwa and Slatter, ‘“Samting Nating”’; Dimity Hawkins, *Addressing humanitarian and environmental harm from nuclear weapons: Monte Bello, Emu Field and Maralinga test sites*, Commonwealth of Australia, PACE University International Disarmament Institute and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York office, https://ny.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Australia-PosObs-Country-Report-6-2-28kgxka.pdf.

Our own intellectual journeys expose some of these tensions. We have taken very different paths to and between feminism and the critical analysis of coloniality in relation to nuclear politics: Eschle from UK disarmament politics to feminism, and then to an interest in black feminist thought and latterly nuclear colonialism in the Pacific; Choi from an entanglement in Korean nuclear politics, then to postcolonial feminism, critical feminist work on the Asia–Pacific as a theatre of war, and questions of praxis. We strive to build bridges across these divergent and hierarchically arranged subject positionings to talk to and think with each other about global nuclear politics. As illustrated by the earlier, far more ambitious and grounded attempt to do this bridging work in the context of US feminist studies, as represented by the *Sing, whisper, shout, pray!* collection, there is a need for greater clarity on what is being bridged, and to what end, and on what emerges when each person engages in this work through the full use of their whole selves, their very bodies and lives. Further, that collection, and Trask's piece in it, also reminds us that some bridges are not worth building because they simply function as corridors of extractive knowledge production and thus provoke further animosity and violence.

In that light, we tentatively suggest that nuclear politics provides a location from which it might be possible to develop a feminist language that allows variously located researchers to better hear and see each other, themselves and their communities. At a minimum, such an endeavour requires bringing both gendered and postcolonial/decolonial analytics into conversation with one another, to work more intersectionally. But more than this, perhaps we might more substantially explore feminist theorizing in broader terms as contesting the dehumanization of those marked as other, as non- or subhuman, and bringing the person back into sites of power. Surviving annihilation, or targeting by nuclear colonialism, produces unwell bodies, bodies that will never recover or be recovered. Making this recognition central to theorizing could encourage IR feminists to follow Tala Khanmalek and Heidi Andrea Restrepo Rhodes in taking sickness, disenfranchisement and subjection, not as an anomaly but as the very condition of life, and of politics, for the world's majority in the contemporary age of necropolitics.⁶⁴

This is not just an issue of the substantive focus of feminist theorizing, but also, crucially, of its process: of *how* feminist theorizing must occur in ways that are more self-critical of the established academic practices of knowledge production. The theorists we draw on to push the argument in this article to its limits—Teaiwa, Trinh, Trask, Khanmalek and Rhodes—write from places that repurpose academic research methods, sites and texts creatively to stay close to ways of knowing and being in the world that have been threatened with erasure by coloniality. The creative methodology deployed by these authors is not simply about being more open to a greater diversity of genres, or to artistic or cultural forms of making sense of the world and human experiences, although several work in poetic, artistic realms. Rather, it is a feminist praxis of staying open to what Trinh

⁶⁴ Tala Khanmalek and Heidi Andrea Restrepo Rhodes, 'A decolonial feminist epistemology of the bed: a compendium incomplete of sick and disabled queer brown femme bodies of knowledge', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 41: 1, 2020, pp. 35–58.

calls the profoundly unsettling nooks and corners of our thinking, or what she terms elsewhere as ‘boundary events’, where one can feel the limits of what can be said, perceived or shared, and find creativity there.⁶⁵ It is to recognize the importance of staying imaginative about where we can travel collectively together as vulnerable, sickly, limited humans. Vulnerability as a mode of knowledge and way of staying open also means suspending judgement and attending to how people’s personal journeys are shaped by their respective histories, struggles and changing circumstances. These are not new insights, but we draw particular attention here to both the difficulty and the importance of putting them into practice in contexts where our daily lives are entangled in militarism, theatres of war and nuclear colonialism. In sum, revitalizing feminist interrogations of global nuclear politics may be as much about seeking innovation in form, voice and positionality as about developing a substantive focus on the relationship between gender and nuclear coloniality.

We learned the above insights in conversation not only with each other and the readings referenced here, but also with the contributors in this special section and others involved in the wider research network from which this special section has been generated. While the concepts we have explored might not directly appear in all the other articles that follow, the praxis behind the concepts certainly shaped how we worked with the authors in the publication workshop as well as in our network meetings and connected conference presentations. In the third and final section, we draw out how the contributions of the articles that follow pick up on some of the themes we have mentioned, before we point briefly to avenues of further research.

Introducing the special section

The articles in this special section significantly expand the empirical reach of feminist IR scholarship on global nuclear politics, both geopolitically and temporally. They focus variously on popular Egyptian discourses during the dawn of the nuclear era, elite debates in 1950s Sweden, invocations of masculinity in the Cuban missile crisis, anti-nuclear discourses in India, recent negotiations on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), contemporary First Nation protests against nuclear waste dumping in Canada, and the poetry of Pacific women in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement. In short, these articles take the reader beyond the Cold War Anglophone elite nuclear discourse and the western feminist anti-nuclear protests of the same era that are so often the only points of reference. They begin the process of decentring 1980s white, western experiences of the global nuclear order in feminist IR. The collection also breaks new ground in feminist IR by encompassing both nuclear weapons and nuclear energy; and by bringing articles on state and interstate nuclear politics into dialogue with research into the bottom-up processes by which such politics

⁶⁵ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Elsewhere, within here: immigration, refugeeism and the boundary event* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

are mediated or contested. Together, the articles show that the global nuclear order and its colonial underpinnings may seem entrenched, but consent has never been universal and dissent remains a longstanding and persistent feature.

More than this, the articles help us see global nuclear politics afresh by speaking in interesting ways to the three themes highlighted in the first part of this introduction. First, they help us rethink the destructiveness of nuclear technologies. Anne Runyan's article does particularly important work in this regard by elaborating the ongoing impacts of the nuclear fuel chain on the lives of First Nation communities at its start and end.⁶⁶ Runyan's account starts from the harms thus meted out, particularly to Indigenous women, including 'effects on fertility ... disruption of cultural and spiritual practices ... greater domestic and cultural responsibilities ... [and] high incidences of gender and sexual-based violence ... arising from the "man-camp" culture of extractive industries'.⁶⁷ While Runyan's article reminds us of lived experiences of nuclear harms, Heba Taha's focuses instead on more abstract and distanced conceptualizations of nuclear destructiveness.⁶⁸ Taha provides an account of how nuclear technologies were conceptualized in 1950s Egypt as small, aesthetically pleasing and productive, as well as monstrous, through a range of contradictory gendered symbols and imagery. Her critical insight here is how such conceptualizations are culturally specific and can vary across time and space.

Moving on to the second theme, Taha's article is one of several that extends understanding of the gendered, racialized and colonial dimensions of nuclear discourses in new directions. To begin with, the collection further contextualizes our understanding of how masculinity is invoked in states' nuclear weapons discourses, showing that Cohn's analysis of what she calls 'techno-strategic' language, and its specific masculine axioms and mechanisms, should not be read as universal but rather as specific to a particular time and place. In this vein, Anand Sreekumar's elaboration of a feminist Gandhian ethic that he believes can ground opposition to Indian nuclearism begins by explaining how that nuclearism took root in the drive to gain status for the Indian postcolonial state *vis-à-vis* the West.⁶⁹ The analysis then extends to the recent reconfigurations of Indian nuclearism in a more extreme, male-supremacist, Hindu nationalist form against an Islamic other, internally and externally. Similarly, Lorraine Bayard de Volo's case-study of the masculine performances of Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis underscores the importance of integrating the racialized hierarchies of the legacies of colonialism, as well as context-specific ethno-political and ideological discourses, into our understanding of how masculinity lends support to nuclear technologies.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Anne Runyan, 'Indigenous women's resistances at the start and end of the nuclear fuel chain', *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1149–67.

⁶⁷ Runyan, 'Indigenous women's resistances', p. 1155.

⁶⁸ Hebatalla Taha, 'Atomic aesthetics: gender, visualization and popular culture in Egypt', *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1169–87.

⁶⁹ Anand Sreekumar, 'Feminism and Gandhi: imagining alternatives beyond Indian nuclearism', *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1189–1209.

⁷⁰ Lorraine Bayard de Volo, 'Masculinity and the Cuban Missile Crisis: gender as pre-emptive deterrent', *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1211–29.

In addition to further contextualizing the masculinity/nuclear nexus, the articles also add layers of complexity to our understanding of how masculinity works here, particularly in terms of its shifting relation to femininity. Bayard de Volo, for instance, makes the intriguing argument that masculinity can act as a ‘pre-emptive deterrent’ against compromise, functioning to entrench nuclear arms racing and brinkmanship. The association of masculinity with rationality is attenuated on this analysis: a masculine refusal to compromise is linked rather to strength and courage, and underpinned by an emotionally driven fear of being seen as weak. Conversely, Sreekumar argues that Gandhian thought provides a basis for opposing Indian nuclearism precisely because of its valorization of the feminine, and of its associated values of vulnerability and interdependence, in ways that draw on Hindu cosmology and an alternative tradition of Indian nationalism, and thus have particular emotional resonance in the Indian context.

In contrast, Taha’s article, and that by Emma Rosengren,⁷¹ loosen the association of masculinity with nuclearism and femininity with disarmament. Taha’s does so by showing how popular Egyptian discourses of the 1950s sometimes represented nuclear technologies through feminine symbolism, as an egg or as a beautiful woman. Emma Rosengren’s case-study of Swedish elite discourses in the 1950s and 1960s explores an instance when masculine values of rationality, responsibility and technological advancement came to be associated with the *disarmament* case rather than the pro-nuclear view. In effect, this made it possible for the Swedish government to renounce the option of developing nuclear weapons, but only by establishing hierarchies of status within disarmament politics between masculine-coded Swedish technical expertise and feminine-coded and racially subordinated others in the global South, seen as lacking such expertise. Together, these two articles must give pause as to whether the elevation of feminine values and symbols is likely to be a successful disarmament strategy.

One article in the collection, by Laura Rose Brown and Laura Considine, takes a very different tack when thinking about the relationship between gender and nuclear discourse.⁷² Rather than focusing on masculinity or on the identity constructions of state leaders, Brown and Considine instead interrogate the politics of including ‘gender’ in international nuclear policy-making, and conflating gender with women, with specific reference to the ongoing negotiations on the NPT. As has been highlighted by practitioners, the structuring role played by masculine values and identities in this ‘hardest’ of ‘hard’ security issues can make it very difficult for women to gain full inclusion in nuclear policy-making; in contrast, the success of “‘soft”, feminized or downright emasculated’ goals such as non-proliferation, disarmament and peace is often problematically attached to women’s bodies.⁷³ Brown and Considine walk us through this conundrum in a

⁷¹ Emma Rosengren, ‘Gendering Sweden’s nuclear renunciation: a historical analysis’, *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1231–48.

⁷² Laura Considine and Laura Rose Brown, ‘Examining “gender-sensitive” approaches to nuclear weapons policy: a study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty’, *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1249–66.

⁷³ Salma Malik, ‘Women and weapons: redressing the gender gap, a Pakistani response’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 70: 5, 2014, p. 14, and other contributions in the same issue.

context where an international nuclear policy-making space has also become a site for the enactment of a 'gender-sensitive' approach. Through a detailed unpacking of the ways in which the concept of gender is mobilized in NPT documentation, Brown and Considine show how activists and states together seek to normalize nuclear diplomacy by subjecting it to the same requirements for gender equality in decision-making that are now considered normative in international institutions more generally. In this way, the article raises the prospect that feminist-informed mechanisms for gender equality within nuclear policy-making may function to perpetuate the structures of nuclear colonialism.

The collection also goes beyond discourse analysis to shed light on the third theme explored in the first part of this introduction: the constitutive, material impacts of colonial dynamics on the global nuclear order and its discontents. Most obviously, the articles by Runyan and by Rebecca Hogue and Anaïs Maurer draw on Indigenous framings of nuclear colonialism to contextualize and explain the resistances discussed in their respective pieces. Runyan's analysis of the nuclear fuel cycle extends the concept of nuclear colonialism to connect with wider practices of 'resource colonialism' and 'environmental racism' within settler states.⁷⁴ This framing of the problem enables Runyan to make sense of the 'water walking' of the women of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation as a manifestation of a claim to sovereignty 'that entails both Indigenous nations' and Indigenous women's self-determination and consent'.⁷⁵ Hogue and Maurer prefer the term 'nuclear imperialisms' because, as they have explained elsewhere, 'in the midst of international pressure to decolonize, nuclearized nations now often appropriate only circumscribed sites in independent countries ... [in] a "pointillist Empire"'.⁷⁶ In their article on women poets in the Pacific between 1970 and 1995, the backdrop of nuclear imperialisms is essential to understanding why the poems featured weave together anti-nuclear struggles with the fight for independence from imperial domination.⁷⁷ In addition, the poems prefigure elements of the structural analysis found in the critical feminist literature on militarism and war theatre to which we drew attention above, in references to militarism, 'environmental toxification' and 'death machines'. Given the centrality of such tropes, there is clear justification for Hogue and Maurer's claim that this poetry is evidence of a pre-existing alternative IR.⁷⁸

Having discussed how the articles exemplify the rethinking of global nuclear politics for which we called in the first part of this introduction, we turn now to consider more briefly the ways in and extent to which they rethink feminism along the lines we advocated in the second part. All the contributions take a feminist approach to the global nuclear order that engages, in different ways and to varying degrees, with the colonial matrix of power. At a minimum, such an endeavour requires bringing both gendered and postcolonial or decolonial analytics in conver-

⁷⁴ Runyan, 'Indigenous women's resistances', p. 1153.

⁷⁵ Runyan, 'Indigenous women's resistances', p. 1165.

⁷⁶ Daniel Immerwahr, cited in Maurer and Hogue, 'Special forum introduction', p. 27.

⁷⁷ Rebecca H. Hogue and Anaïs Maurer, 'Pacific women's anti-nuclear poetry: centring Indigenous knowledges', *International Affairs* 98: 4, 2022, pp. 1267–88.

⁷⁸ Hogue and Maurer, 'Pacific women's anti-nuclear poetry', p. 1282, 1284.

sation with each other, to work more intersectionally. The contributions in this special section all keep this idea intact, even if most do not interrogate it. Beyond this, we note that there are some glimpses of the substantive and stylistic shift for which we argued, in terms of contesting the dehumanization of those marked as other and moving them from the margins to the centre of feminist analysis. Taha and Sreekumar gesture towards this: the former by insisting that the citizens of non-nuclear states in the global South have contributed to the construction of the global nuclear order in creative and ambivalent ways; the latter by constructing his feminist Gandhian anti-nuclear ethic partly in relation to the vulnerable bodies and angry words of women protesting against the Kudankulam power plant, as well as the theorizing of some prominent Indian feminists.⁷⁹ The contributions by Runyan and by Hogue and Maurer are most explicit in this respect, however, as they directly root their analyses in the lives and words of Indigenous women more typically marginalized or entirely absent in feminist enquiry. Moreover, they treat these women not simply as objects of enquiry but as producers of knowledge, and more specifically of *feminist* knowledge. And they hint at the more creative methodology we suggested is necessary to construct a non-extractive knowledge-building relationship, by creating archives and conducting long-term ethnographies, and by including diverse practices like ‘water walking’ and poetry as sites of global nuclear politics.

Taken as a whole, then, this special section is a promising beginning to the kind of feminist approach to nuclear politics that takes coloniality seriously as advocated in this introductory article. There is much still to be done to extend, deepen and further complicate the terms and language used to forge critical feminist conversations. Notably, there are some obvious geopolitical gaps in the location of the authors and the focus of the case-studies in this special section. Our best efforts to push beyond the UK–North American blinkers of the IR discipline, and beyond the discipline itself, proved insufficient to counter the current incentive structures and stratified knowledge economy of the global academy. Future feminist discussions of global nuclear politics should go further. For example, they could include the settler-colonial dimensions of the Israeli bomb; the distinctive ways in which masculinity is invoked in the nuclear discourses of Pakistani or Iranian elites; and the role of white supremacist masculinities in sustaining apartheid South African efforts to develop nuclear technologies. The gendered dimensions of extractive nuclear industries across parts of Africa would also be a fruitful line of enquiry,⁸⁰ as would efforts to historicize the roots of Vladimir Putin’s recent escalation of nuclear sabre-rattling in longer-standing rival masculinities in Soviet nuclear elites, in rival nuclear colonialisms, and in gendered perceptions of the humiliation of Russia in the post-Cold War order.⁸¹

Moreover, there are conceptual bridges still to be built between and beyond feminist and postcolonial, decolonial, Indigenous and other critical scholarship

⁷⁹ Taha, ‘Atomic aesthetics’; Sreekumar, ‘Feminism and Gandhi’.

⁸⁰ Building on Hecht, *Being nuclear*.

⁸¹ Building on the work of Luba Zatssepina, *Competition, masculinities and peacekeeping: constructions of Soviet nuclear identity and policy from Stalin to Gorbachev*, PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2020.

Rethinking global nuclear politics, rethinking feminism

on nuclear politics. Could future research go further beyond an intersectional approach to acknowledge some of the tensions we outlined above, to think more critically about the problems of extractive relations of knowledge production across North and South, and to radically reconstruct what ‘counts’ as feminist IR? Might extended attention to the substantive challenges of global nuclear politics help us to do feminist IR in more creative ways? In raising these questions for the broadening and deepening of feminist conversations on the coloniality of nuclear politics, our hope is that feminist IR scholars and others interested in learning from them can contribute in meaningful ways not only to rethinking the global nuclear order, but ultimately to its undoing.