

Women, War and Peace – A feminist content analysis.

Maija Laukka

University of Tampere
School of Social Science and Humanities
MDP in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research
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School of Social Science and Humanities
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Throughout history war has commonly been associated with the actions of men and the victimhood of women. The objective of my thesis has been to identify alternative roles and experiences of civilian women's in the face of war and peace. Hence, I have also by applied also the concepts of practitioners and empowerment to my study in addition to the dominating discourse of that women are passive victims and targets as well as the impression that war and peacebuilding only affect men.

The research material for analysis in this study is based on the "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building" by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf published in 2002. I have examined the research material using the systematic literature review as part of the content analysis methodology. The systematic literature review is considered to be an effective tool when the research goal is to deepen the knowledge of already existing information or phenomena.

Throughout the analytical chapter of my study my intension is to exemplify women's experiences and different roles women have in the context of war and peace as well as to describe elements which enables empowerment. To understand the complex context of my study I have illustrated the theoretical frame of feminist research by using the gender lenses approach. By looking at different global issues through gender lenses we can dispel misconceptions about the world, focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation and to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes. According to Jill Steans gender lenses focus on the everyday experiences of women as women and highlight the consequences of their unequal social position.

Generally, women are characterized as helpless and in need of protection, especially in the context of armed conflicts. In stead of biological factors this vulnerability is more a consequence of patriarchal, cultural, social and political causes. Altogether, women do not have the same resources, authority and political rights to meet their personal needs or control their environments as men. Despite the horrors women are facing in conflicts, the research material also highlights that women in conflict areas have not given up hope of transformation. Even though women have been practitioners on the grass root level in solving conflicts, women are almost completely missing from official peace negotiations and peace agreements. Exclusion from reconstruction processes restricts and limits empowerment of women. To be able to recover from conflicts women should be provided the possibility to gain justice for human rights violations and sexual violence and to participate in shaping egalitarian societies.

Key words: Feminist research, gender lenses, war, conflict, peacebuilding, reconstruction

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1. Introduction

“ Most of today’s conflicts take place within states. Their root causes often include poverty, the struggle for scarce resources, and violations of human rights. They have another tragic feature in common: women and girls suffer their impact disproportionately. While women and girls endure the same trauma as the rest of the population -- bombings, famines, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation -- they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuse, including sexual violence and exploitation.

Efforts to resolve these conflicts and address their root causes will not succeed unless we empower all those who have suffered from them -- including and especially women. And only if women play a full and equal part can we build the foundations for enduring peace -- development, good governance, human rights and justice.

In conflict areas across the world, women’s movements have worked with the United Nations to rebuild the structures of peace and security, to rehabilitate and reconcile societies, to protect refugees and the internally displaced, to educate and raise awareness of human rights and the rule of law. Within the Organization itself, the integration of gender perspectives in peace and security areas has become a central strategy.”

- Kofi A. Annan, United Nation
Secretary General 1997-2006¹

There is an old story about war. In the story it is thought that war only affects men. Men are the ones who decides to go to war, men do the military planning, men are the ones fighting in the front lines protecting the nation and men are the ones dying in war. The role of women is to be protected by the

¹ Women, Peace and Security : Study Submitted by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325. (New York: United Nations, 2002), ix.

men, but remain peripheral to the war and fighting itself. Women support their fighting men and raise sons they willingly sacrifice for their nation. Sometimes in the story women take the workload men left behind when they went of fighting, but only for the time men are to battle. When it is time to settle the disputes, men negotiate peace. Men share the power and divide the spoils after the war.²

These masculine prevalent myths usually also include the assumption that the frontline is separate from the home front and a collective pretending that women are at all times victims in the face of conflicts. Media persists in the glaring gendering of warfare as male work and women as victims of war. Needless to say, many armed forces remain highly gendered. If someone is idealistic enough to assume that warfare only involves conflicts between different armed forces, maybe this masculine representation and worldview would be accurate. But as a practical matter, war has never been primarily the work of men and it has never affected only men. Violence against women is ancient and for centuries it has been effectively silenced. Rape in wars has not been seen in statistics or in history books.

Contemporary armed conflicts are predominantly internal, with regional and sub regional impacts. The victims and targets of these conflicts are disproportionately civilians. According to the United Nations, during the First World War about 5 per cent of all casualties were civilians. After the cold war the civilians accounts for up to 90 per cent of the casualties in conflicts. Civilians are being subjugated to a high level of violence and brutality as well as human rights violations. Mass displacement, genocide, violence against ethnic and religious groups, gender based and sexual violence, systematic rape and scorched earth tactics such as poisoning of wells are common. Although whole communities suffer the consequences of conflicts, civilian women are particularly affected due to their sex and social status.³

The roles of women in war and conflict have recently received increased attention in the political debate as well as in academia. At the turn of the millennium, women's rights gained importance with the transition to a "women in peace and security" framework which framed women's rights as a basis for maintaining international peace and security. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000 is seen as a ground-breaking culmination point in raising global attention and dialogue about civilian women disproportionately suffering during war and conflict.

² Carol Cohn, *Women and Wars*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 1.

³ United Nations 2002, 1-2 and United Nations: Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. (New York: United Nations, 2016), 17-18.

More than six decades since the founding of the United Nations and its Security Council, the Resolution 1325 is the first formal and legal document from the Security Council to recognize that women are particularly affected in conflicts and their neglected role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution.⁴

1.1. My motives for this research: what is being researched and why?

When I started my conscription service in the Finnish Army in 1997 I was not aware that five years later I will graduate as an officer from the Finnish Naval Academy. I was the only female cadet graduating from my class in 2003 and the second female to graduate from the academy throughout history. Nor was I aware that twenty years later I am studying Peace and Conflict Research at master's level at the University of Tampere.

I have an inquisitive personality and curiosity for the development of the surrounding world. I like to exit my comfort zone. Since graduation from the Naval Academy I have served in different positions in the military organised and male dominant Finnish Coast Guard, both in Finland and abroad. For twelve years I was the only female officer in service.

During one of the courses within the peace and conflicts studies, I familiarized myself with the report "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building" by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. After reading the first chapter following feelings came into my mind: disillusioned, sad and shaken. I can not pretend the issues in the report were completely new for me, but I was confused about how the reading affected me. I soon found myself digging much deeper into the topic. So deep that I became interested in writing my thesis around the notion of civilian women, war and peace.

Half of my life I have been doing my service as an officer in a masculine military culture. For me war and conflict has mainly been about the perspectives of combat strategy and battle tactics. When choosing the topic for my thesis I wanted to deepen and enlarge my knowledge and make an exodus from the military point of view. If I wanted to study the interlink between women, war and peace it soon became evident that my research perspective would be leaning towards feminist research. There

⁴ Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik and Aisling Swaine. Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation. (The George Washington University, Institute for Global and International Studies. Washington 2014), 6-10.

I was again, out of my comfort zone. For me the word feminism has a negative tone. I connote feminism with uptight women with utopian ideas and ideals.

I quickly realized that the negative tone originated from lack of knowledge on the broad notion what feminism is about. Ackerly and True explains in their book "Doing feminist research in political & social science":

“ We think of feminism as that critical perspective on social and political life that draws our attention to the ways in which social, political, and economic norms, practices, and structures create injustices that are experienced differently or uniquely by certain groups of women. Taking this view of feminism in your research does not require you to participate in direct social and political action or necessarily to label or identify yourself as a feminist”.⁵

Liljeström concludes in her publication about feminist research that the production of our new ideas are tied and forms the framing of our research, research questions and arguments. All information starts from the clash of different concepts that evoke new ideas. Concepts mean discernment of differences, experimental interaction and certainly a place of conversation. The fundamental function of the concepts is to focus the interest and to arrange the phenomena in a new, interesting and meaningful way.⁶

This study is relevant to enhance one's understanding of roles civilian women has in face of war and peace. Hence, by combining theoretical gender lenses from various academic disciplines, and the analysis of women's lived experiences based on cross-national case studies in all their trauma, healing, and triumph, this study can be utilised as a basic source of information for peace and conflict students as well as others interested in discovering that women are so much more than only victims of war. Hopefully, this study also inspires the readers for further studies about this important topic around the "Women, peace and security" framework.

Throughout history war has commonly been associated with the actions of men and the victimhood of women. The objective of my study is to identify alternative views of viewing civilian women's experiences in the face of war and peace by applying also the concepts of practitioners and

⁵ Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True. *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

⁶ Marianne Liljeström. *Feministinen Tietäminen: Keskustelua Metodologiasta*. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2004), 18-19.

empowerment in addition to the dominating discourse of passive victims as well as the impacts that war and peacebuilding only affect men. Nonetheless, the purpose is not to disrespect the dialogue of women's victimhood and vulnerability context in scholarship.

The victim discourse is of great significance when recognising and identifying the universal patriarchal subordination of women, as well as to recognise the atrocities and suffering civilian women experience. However, it is also important to avoid the "victimisation trap" and recognise that half of the world's population have myriad roles in the complex settings of conflicts and peace. Through the framework created by the gender lenses approach on concepts and definitions, the research questions are qualitatively analysed using content analysis methodology. The main source for analysis in this study is the report "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building" by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

1.2. Familiarization with the research context and reflection on previous research

It is important to point out that much writing on war, violence and peace exists. In general plenty of these publications are described through lenses of man, masculinity and the state. In my research I wanted to focus on women, femininity and the everyday life of women in war and conflict, even though men, masculinity, states and global politics are certainly part of the scene.

While outlining the conceptual framework for this study it revealed to me that the relationship between women and wars have been noted in the past two decades and is currently a topical and much discussed topic. As the discussion and debate around the issue have accelerated, plenty of material can be found in connection with the theme: official policy documents, research publications, documentaries, books, seminar material and so forth. The core issue while collecting the research material was to explore what material was relevant for this study.

After a wide data collection process it became evident that the two independent experts' assessment would serve as an excellent basis to answer the questions of my curiosity which then were formulated as my research questions. Firstly, it is an assessment which was funded by the United Nations for the purpose to document the global experiences of women in the context of "Women, Peace and Security" framework. However, it is an independent experts' assessment, not a United Nations publication. The background and design of the assessment is explained in chapter 3. The UN "Women, Peace and Security" framework aims to improve women's rights in conflict and post-

conflict settings by protecting them from the disproportionate impact conflict situations have on women and including women in decision making processes.

Secondly, the experts Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represents contrasting and similar features. Elisabeth Rehn was at the time of writing the assessment in 2002 a former Finnish Minister of Defence and Minister of equality affairs. After her domestic political career in Finland she was appointed to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Republic of Croatia, FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYROM (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) as well as United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative of Secretary-General in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷ After publishing the assessment Elisabeth Rehn has held several distinguished international positions promoting human rights, especially in the context of peace, security, gender and equality. She represents a white middleclass western woman while Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represents an educated coloured woman from the global south with a diverse ethnic background.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was born in Liberia and was educated in the United States at Harvard University. At the time of writing the special experts assessment Johnson Sirleaf had held the position of Minister of Finance in Liberia, however due to a coup d'état and her opposing the military administration, she was sentenced to ten-years of imprisonment. Johnson Sirleaf escaped to the United States and returned to Liberia in 1997 representing the Worldbank. In 2006 Johnson Sirleaf became the first female president of Liberia as well as the first female president of any nation on the African continent.⁸ In 2011 she won the Nobel Peace Prize together with Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman for their “non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work”.⁹

Many analytical publications about the “Women, Peace and Security” theme mentions and refers to the independent experts’ assessment. However, a more in-depth academic analysis of the content of the report is lacking. In this chapter I have previously stated that a relevant international debate, both academic and political as well as activist level, on the role of women in conflict situations has

⁷ Elisabeth Rehn bibliographical information. Rehn. <http://www.g-l-f.org/index.cfm?id=23710> Accessed 4.12.2017.

⁸ Ellen Johnson Sirleaf bibliographical information. <https://www.biography.com/people/ellen-johnson-sirleaf-201269>. Accessed 4.12.2017

⁹ Nobelprize. The Nobel Peace Prize for 2011. https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/press.html. Accessed 4.12.2017.

accelerated in the previous years. It is therefore very timely and interesting to study this important topic, which still is left in the margins of world politics.

In addition to the independent experts' assessment I reviewed several United Nations publications, namely the Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" (UN 2000) and the follow up Security Council resolutions 1820 (UN 2009); 1888 (UN 2009); 1889 (UN 2010); 1960 (UN 2011); 2106 (UN 2013); 2122 (UN 2013) and 2242 (UN2015). These eight resolutions make up the core of the "Women, Peace and Security" Framework. The resolutions enhance the work to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection and rights in conflict prevention through post-conflict reconstruction processes. A very useful UN source was also the "Women, Peace and Security : Study Submitted by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325" (UN 2002).

To explore the theoretical sources I begun with the "Toinen maailmanpolitiikka – 10 käsitettä feministiseen kansainvälisten suhteiden tutkimukseen"¹⁰ edited by Johanna Kantola and Johanna Valenius (2007). From this publication I especially reviewed the chapters "World politics"¹¹ by Johanna Kantola and Johanna Valenius, chapter "War"¹² by Kirsi Mäki and chapter "Peace"¹³ written by Tarja Väyrynen. To enhance the knowledge of the theoretical discussion in connection to my research questions and feminist research I explored several prominent scholars from different disciplines.

Furthermore I studied Jean Bethke Elshtain's "Women and War" (1987) and Cynthia Enloe's "Bananas, beaches & bases : making feminist sense of international politics" (1989). In the western world the gender and war studies in the international politics are usually considered to have begun in the 1980s with the works of these two American scholars. At this point I would also like to mention Joshua S Goldstein "War and gender: how gender shapes the war system and vica versa" (2001). I think his book gave interesting analytical insight on the topic and this was the only male scholar's publication I familiarized myself with. The reason for this is that there are very few male scholars analysing and publishing books and articles around the topic.

¹⁰ Only published in Finnish. Own translation "Second world politics - 10 concepts for feminist research in international relations".

¹¹ Own translation, original "Maailmanpolitiikka".

¹² Own translation, original "Sota".

¹³ Own translation, original "Rauha".

I continued the studies with Carol Cohn's edited "Women&Wars" (2013) and J. Ann Tickner's "Feminist Voyage Through International Relations" (2014). At this point Cynthia Enloe's "The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire" (2004) introduced me to feminist curiosity and V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan gender lenses approach explained in "Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium" (2010). Johan Galtung's concept of "positive and negative peace" originated from his article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" in the Journal of Peace Research from 1969 and Mary Kaldor's "New&old wars: organised violence in a global era" paved the path for understanding the inter linkage of the concepts of peace and war. In addition to these mentioned scholars several others have also been a great source of information, widened my knowledge and inspiration about the whole complex theme during this research process.

1.3. Research questions

It is relevant to underline that by no means are women a homogenous alignment of people who all have the same needs. Women experience conflicts, war and peace in multitude ways according to for example background, class, ethnicity, age and women's role in the conflict. The independent experts recognise this diversity. However, as they describe in the preface of the report some of the experiences follows similar patterns:

"While our goal was to focus on the testimonies of women we met during our visits, we wanted to demonstrate that their experiences are not country-specific, but global. Many of the trends we saw are universal phenomena"¹⁴.

War and conflict to a woman can mean inter alia fear, violence, sexual violence, loss of beloved ones, displacement, increased responsibility of family members and sometimes death. War and conflicts also forces women into different unfamiliar roles. Women are required to strengthen existing skills as well as to possibly develop new eminences. The dominating discourse in the existing literature is mainly focused on victimhood and vulnerability and the negative experiences women possess.

As most experiences of women in peace and war settings are diverse and complex, their lived experiences can not be interpreted into clear positive or negative categories. The roles can also be shifting. For example, some women move between what can be categorised as victims and

¹⁴ Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. "Women war and peace: The independent experts assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and womens role in peace-building." (Vol. 1. New York, 2002), viii.

practitioners simultaneously and can be both empowered and disempowered by different actions. The research questions are formulated with keeping the diversity and complexity in mind.

The research material for analysis in this study is based on the “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building” by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The thesis proceeds from the following questions:

According to the afore mentioned independent experts’ assessment:

- How are women portrayed as practitioners, targets and victims in the contexts of peacebuilding and conflict settings?
- What kind of ‘women empowering’ elements can be identified in the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes?

1.4. Structure of the research

Throughout the analytical chapter of my study my intension is to exemplify women’s experiences and different roles women have in the context of war and peace as well as to describe elements which enables empowerment. To understand the complex context of my study I have illustrated the theoretical frame of feminist research by using the gender lenses approach. Certainly the topic could also have been approached by other theoretical frameworks. However, as previously explained, for me this study is an adventure into a new way of understanding issues related to war and peace.

This study is structured in the following way: the first introductory section frames the topic and motivation for my study. The second chapter is devoted to the background of the research material and is preceded by the methodological and theoretical framework in the third chapter. In the following fourth chapter the findings are presented and then the final conclusions and reflections are drawn in the last chapter number five.

2. Background and presentation of the research material

This chapter of my study introduces and explains the background why and for what purpose the “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building ” by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was created. Moreover, the chapter illuminates the process of how the assessment was conducted and compiled as well as how the assessment was globally received.

2.1. Security Council Resolution 1325

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security during its 4231st meeting. The resolution comprises with the special impact that war and conflicts has on women and children. The resolution also underlines the imperative to involve women in peace building, conflict prevention and post- conflict reconstruction.

The resolution is seen by many as a historic document. It has been explained as a watershed in the political framework making women, and a gender perspective, momentous when negotiating peace agreements and relevant while reconstructing conflict-torn societies. The gender perspective should also be essential while planning peacekeeping operations and refugee camps. In many respects, the UNSCR 1325 is also considered historic because of the fact that women in the global South, international women's organizations and researchers have played an active and important role in its preparation¹⁵.

UNSCR 1325 builds on a number of global policy documents. Among them are previously adopted Security Council resolutions that focus on refugees, children and armed conflict, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the need to assist African states in maintaining the peace and security of refugee camps. Other relevant policy documents are the Geneva Conventions, the Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The resolution also refers to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, relevant presidential statements and other UN documents, especially the Security Council’s presidential statement on the occasion of International Women’s Day in the year 2000, which expresses that “peace is inextricably linked with equality between

¹⁵ Marjaana Jauhola. Johdanto. Naiset, Rauha Ja Turvallisuus – Aseellisten Konfliktien Sukupuolittuneet Vaikutukset 15 Vuotta Kansainvälisen Poliitiikan Keskiössä. (Suomen 1325-verkosto, 2015), 3.

women and men”, not to mention the Charter of the United Nations which identifies the maintenance of international peace and security as “the primary responsibility of the Security Council”.¹⁶

The resolution’s core issue is the disproportionate impact of all forms of armed conflict on the lives of women and girls. Hence, there is a need to increase the number of women being involved in all processes concerning conflict prevention, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution recognizes the necessity to incorporate a gender perspective into peace operations as well as to train peacekeeping personnel in human rights issues of women and children. In order to completely understand the impact of war and conflicts on women and girls the resolution calls for the collection of relevant data.

By articulating direct commitments to the previously adopted Security Council resolutions, the UNSC 1325 draws for support of the issues contained within these resolutions as well as further legitimizes these concerns as essential to the maintenance of international peace and security. Laura Shepherd concludes that ” these earlier Resolutions seemed to foreclose the possibility that the Council might recognize women’s agency in their own protection and in the resolution of armed conflict and it is this shortcoming that UNSCR 1325 seeks to redress”¹⁷.

The resolution was followed by two major studies in response to the mandate stemmed from the UNSCR 1325 to the Secretary General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution¹⁸. The first, the UN Secretary-General’s study “Women, Peace and Security” (2002) was prepared within the framework of the Inter-agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security and coordinated by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. It focuses on the activities of the United Nations and on how the various UN agencies have integrated gender into their peacebuilding work. The study builds on existing research with inputs of the United Nations, its programmes, funds and specialized agencies, Member States, scholars and local and international non- governmental organizations.¹⁹

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. (United Nations. 2000).

¹⁷ Shepherd, Laura J. *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse As Practice* (London, New York: Zed Books 2008), 108-109.

¹⁸ United Nations 2002, ix.

¹⁹ United Nations 2002, xi-xii.

The second study, “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building” (2002). The assessment is widely known as the ”Women, War and Peace” assessment by the independent experts.

2.2. “Women, War and Peace” assessment

Following the adoption of UNSCR 1325 UNIFEM²⁰ appointed two special representatives to conduct an in-depth assessment into women, peace and security issues. In a press release from the 25 April 2001 the Executive Director of UNIFEM, Noeleen Heyzer, announces that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Elisabeth Rehn are the nominated experts to conduct this assessment which aim to uncover the hidden gender dimensions of war. “Armed conflicts affect women and girls differently from men and boys. These gender dimensions continue to be ignored. The issue at stake are enormous” Heyzer states.²¹ The report aimed to provide the necessary data and analysis to implement the UNSCR 1325 and to give a voice of vital importance to a population group seldom heard.

In addition to the mandate from the UNSCR 1325 to carry out an in-depth study on the issue, the assessment was also a direct response to the call from Graça Machel, at that time the United Nations Secretary- General’s Expert on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, to collect a report on the gender dimensions of conflicts and its relevance to international peace and security²².

As part of this assessment, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Elisabeth Rehn travelled to 14 conflict-affected countries around the world, gathering evidence and testimonies on the impact of conflicts on women as well as women’s role in building peace. Over the course of one year, during 2001 and 2002 the experts visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; including Kosovo, Guinea, Israel, Liberia, the occupied Palestinian territories, Rwanda,

²⁰ Today known as UN Women

²¹ The perspective. UN Appoints Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Assess Progress of World's Women, A Press Release from the United Nations Development Fund for Women. <http://www.theperspective.org/unifem.html> . Accessed 7.9.2017.

²² Machel, Graça. The Machel review, 1996-2000: a critical analysis of progress made and obstacles encountered in increasing protection for war-affected children. (Govt. of Canada, Ottawa, 2000), 47 and Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 3.

Sierra Leone and Somalia.²³ Rehn describes that the report required travelling to the most terrible and most dangerous places for women in the world²⁴

”It was quite a journey. All we saw affected us deeply. A feeling grew inside, that so much more needs to be done for women around the world. We decided to tell the women’s stories we met with their own voices. We denied to write a glossy polished UN report where only nice things are said²⁵.” Nor Rehn or Johnson Sirleaf were strangers to war and with their personal history and records the experts possess an understanding of world politics and ripe political moments. Both independent experts saw this report as such a moment. ”This is an opportunity to improve protection for women in armed conflict and to strengthen women’s contribution to peace processes and to rebuild their communities” Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf writes in the preface of the report.²⁶ Even though atrocities and pain was not a novel issue for the experts they were little prepared for the enormity human suffering existing in the livelihood of women affected by conflicts.²⁷

2.3. Gathering information for the assessment

Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf opens their way of working in the preface to the assessment. The women prepared for each trip by familiarizing themselves with the background of the conflict and by designing questions to guide interactions. However, they found that they received more information and genuine answers to their questions with an informal approach. The victims' encounters were not recorded or filmed, nor were identities revealed in order to protect the interviewed persons from reprisal. Instead careful notes were made. The meetings were informal to ensure that the interviewed women would be as comfortable as possible to talk about extremely distressing events and issues. Besides the field interviews and information collection, the report is supported by research and analysis from human right groups and civil society, independent reports and UN documents.²⁸

Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf collected first-hand information, data and testimonies of women who had survived conflicts. They met with victims of conflict, refugees, internally displaced women, activists, as well as representatives from national and international non-governmental organizations, media,

²³ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, vii.

²⁴ Johanna Vesikallio. Lillan Elisabeth Rehnin Epätavallinen Elämä (Keuruu: Otava, 2014), 273.

²⁵ Elisabeth kohtaa: Elisabeth kohtaa Ellen Johnson Sirleafin. Cityportal Ab, 2012. Watched 12.9.2017 from KAVI archive.

²⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, vii.

²⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf vii.

²⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, vii.

religious organizations and major civil society leaders. Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf also interviewed UN employees and political decision-makers - representatives of the opposition and government parties to explore how the gender issue is approached and what is being done from their perspective regarding the issue. The meetings were held in offices, at homes, health clinics, refugee camps, streets, bars and restaurants.²⁹

The experts were supported, guided and partly joined by an Advisory group composed of international practitioners, policy advisers, scholars and civil society leaders within human rights, humanitarian assistance, peace building and peace support operations. To complement the overall picture the experts consulted many researchers and experts who provided research material and counselling related to the content of the report.³⁰ The foreign affairs correspondent for the Guardian magazine Victoria Brittain edited the findings of the experts into a report.³¹ Notwithstanding, nor the preface or the assessment itself explains how the 14 conflict affected countries were chosen or how and who facilitated and chose the persons the experts interviewed.

2.4. Design of the independent experts' assessment

The assessment is designed to document the disproportionate affect of war on women. It highlights narratives of women in embattled regions that exemplify the types of situations women face during and after times of armed conflict. However, the assessment is not claiming universal innocence of women, nor is it arguing that men are more warlike and women inherently more peaceful. Despite the atrocities and horrors women are facing during conflicts the assessment underlines that women in conflict areas have not given up hope of transformation and peace.³²

The assessment is divided into ten chapters. Each of its ten chapters addresses a specific theme and ends with a set of policy recommendations. The themes are:

- violence against women
- displacement
- health

²⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf vii.

³⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, ix.

³¹ The perspective. <http://www.theperspective.org/unifem.html> . Accessed 7.9.2017.

³² Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 1-2.

- HIV/AIDS
- organizing for peace
- peace operations
- justice and accountability
- media and communication
- reconstruction
- prevention

During visits to 14 war zones in Africa, the Middle East, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe, the experts witnessed upsetting and tragic evidence of violence against women and girls during recent conflicts. Independently of the place, time, and reasons of the conflict such as ideology, religion or ethnicity, the stories and the pain seems to be similar.³³

2.5. Launching the assessment

When all the visits to the 14 war torn countries were completed, the data analysed and the conclusions finalized it was time to launch the assessment and introduce how the world could be changed in this regard. However, before the final launching of the assessment Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf presented their findings to the UN Security Council in an informal event in New York.³⁴ "We faced difficulties in getting the report accepted by the UN. It was so different from the others." Johnson Sirleaf says³⁵. The problem in the UN headquarters about the assessment was the critics against the misbehaving and grievance of UN peacekeeping forces, especially the sexual exploitation of women.³⁶

The chief for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations asked the experts to delete the uncomfortable parts relating to UN peacekeeping forces from the assessment. Rehn insisted that if the assessment is not published as the experts have produced it, her name should not appear on the assessment. Finally, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the assessment is fine as it stands. The UN should suffer this publicity and the experts should not withdraw. Eventually the assessment

³³ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 1-2.

³⁴ Vesikallio, 284.

³⁵ Elisabeth kohtaa: Elisabeth kohtaa Ellen Johnson Sirleafin.

³⁶ Vesikallio, 284-285.

was published in October 2002 with all the content the experts had produced. Nonetheless, due to the resistance in the UN HQ, the report was not published as an official UN document but as an independent experts assessment.³⁷

According to Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf the assessment received a very good acceptance all over the world. It was easy to read and the reader could identify him or herself with the suffering of these women.”³⁸ Whilst the focus of the assessment is on the stories and testimonies of the interviewed women, the experts wanted to demonstrate that the women's experiences are not always related to a specific country and its conflict, but are global and many of the witnessed trends are of universal phenomena.³⁹ As stated in the assessment ” without women’s representation – without half of the population – no country can truly claim to be engaged in democratic development and participatory governance”.⁴⁰

If viewed in a narrow context the UNSCR 1325 and the whole ”Women, Peace and Security” framework can be seen as development of the international law to respond to the protection of women and girls in conflict zones. In a broader context the UNSCR 1325 and the series of following resolutions and studies is a historical endeavour to integrate the gender perspective into the work of the United Nations and its member states in the promotion of equality, protection and peace context. It is difficult to exactly assess which impact the special experts’ assessment has in a broader context. While gathering material for my research I noted that several publications and academia in the framework of the “Women, Peace and Security” refers and quotes to the independent experts’ assessment, also outside the United Nations frame. Therefore, the assessment can be seen as an important product of its time for sharing more comprehensive knowledge and information on the role of women in war and conflict as well as peace building context.

2.6. Possible limitations of the research material

According to Liesinen, the cultural layers of our minds always range from the national level to the subcultures of our own reference group. We are influenced by ethnic, linguistic and religious factors within our own culture. Gender and generational differences, as well as the social class we belong to, influence our approaches. Our political vision also tends to distort our interpretation of our beliefs.

³⁷ Vesikallio, 284-285.

³⁸ Elisabeth kohtaa: Elisabeth kohtaa Ellen Johnson Sirleafin.

³⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, viii.

⁴⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, viii.

Research has shown that our background is a critical factor in intercultural observation. The way we observe communities and social situations is coloured by our own cultural affairs and dictates what we sense, what we perceive, how we interpret and how we communicate our perception.⁴¹ Therefore it can be stated that the settings of the independent experts' assessment is greatly influenced by the experts' position, both from a scientific and a social point of view. The information one produce is never neutral or objective, instead it is information generated through a partial perspective and one possible way to see and deal with reality. In this regard it is important to acknowledge in which contexts the independent experts' assessment is conducted and what is the experts' relationship with the context "Women, War and Peace" is.

It can be questioned if the content of a fifteen-year-old assessment still is relevant? For example, Miller, Pournik and Swaine raises the wider question in their study about the content analysis of National Action Plans related to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and their implementation from 2014:

"How quickly can diffusion be expected in the context of a new global gender equality promoting norm? How quickly can it be "localized" and how quickly institutionalize practices that support it?"⁴²

Certainly, the parts of the assessment which directly describe legal acts and the fact sheets of the report might be outdated. However, I argue that the parts of the report which my study analyzes, the experience of civilian women in war and peace and the possibilities for empowerment are still highly relevant. The world is changing, but in some cases painfully slowly.

⁴¹ Liesinen, Kalle. "Inhimillinen turvallisuus ja kulttuurien välinen kuilu" in Alm, Oili, and Tapio Juntunen. *Inhimillistä Turvallisuutta Rakentamassa: Näkökulmia Ja Käytännön Esimerkkejä.* (KATU, Helsinki, 2010), 139-141.

⁴² Miller, Pournik, and Swaine, 15.

3. Methodology and theoretical framework

In this chapter I provide the description and justification of the methodology I have based my research on. The chapter continues with the theoretical framework of the study where is considered the notion of the feminist research and how it matters, as well as the practice how feminist research is applied in this study.

3.1. Methodology

I have based my findings using content analysis as the research methodology. Content analysis is a systematic way to study and analyse texts as well as other cultural products or non-living data forms. This means that the data applied in this kind of research exists independently of the research process itself. Hence, the researcher collects pre-existing data instead of creating or co-creating the raw data for research through surveys, ethnography, or interviews. This labels the data with two unique qualities which enables a built-in level of authenticity to the data. Firstly, the data is pre-existing and naturalistic and secondly it is not interactive. The level of authenticity afforded to pre-existing data is of critical nature to feminist researchers, who according to Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy are particularly harangued with questions of quality and validity from the larger scientific community as they argue that feminist research is devalued by this community.⁴³

Content analysis is a qualitative research methodology aimed at obtaining a concise but general description of the underlying phenomenon. With content analysis the researcher aims to organize the data in a compact and clear form without losing its information. Content analysis rather summarizes the topic than reports all details. Suitable research material for content analysis can consist of a variety of sources such as documents, reports, books, articles, interviews, or many other types of material that can be transformed into written form.⁴⁴ While content analysis is an accepted method in the field of social sciences, there are no fixed rules which determine its framework. The forms, the units and level of analysis, vary from one text to another, depending on the aim of the research.⁴⁵

⁴³ Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. *Feminist Research Practice : A Primer*. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2007), 227.

⁴⁴ Jouni Tuomi and Anneli Sarajärvi. *Laadullinen Tutkimus Ja Sisällönanalyysi*. (5., uud. laitos. Helsinki: Tammi, 2009), 103, 108 and Kimberly A. Neuendorf. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. (Sage: Thousand Oaks California, 2002), 13-15.

⁴⁵ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 238.

I have examined the research material using the systematic literature review as part of the content analysis methodology. The systematic literature review is considered to be an effective tool when the research goal is to deepen the knowledge of already existing information or phenomena.⁴⁶ The systematic literature review is directed by the research material, in this case by the report "Women war and peace: The independent experts' assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building.". One of my largest concerns with my research was using one report to analyse. This could be seen as using a single source of pre-existing data and therefore no new information can be achieved. According to Atkinson and Delamont:

“ A new research project provides a new context for the creation and emerge of ‘data’, particularly through the contemporary production of the relationship between researcher and data. Thus secondary analysis is not so much the analysis of pre-existing data; rather secondary analysis involves the process of re-contextualising, and reconstructing, data.”⁴⁷

The first phase of the research process is to identify the issues that are originated from the research question or questions and the essential issues for the research are raised. Thereafter the material can be divided using different themes⁴⁸. The classification and clustering of the research material into themes began to shape already at an early stage of my research. I read alongside both my research material and the feminist theories used in this study and as the reading proceeded I created themes in a word document of the issues I found relevant to answer my research questions.

The classification and clustering of the research material differentiating from the original assessment seemed sensible, since through the theoretical framework it was possible to see clear entities stemming from the research material. The experts' assessment is constructed in a way that the content in the original ten chapters are partly overlapping each other. Finally, I created five themes, based on the theoretical framework, clustering the original ten chapters to facilitate the analysis. In this research the following themes forms the basis for the systematic literature analysis:

- The “beautiful soul” narrative, gaining knowledge and changing policies
- Violence against women in conflict

⁴⁶ Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 123.

⁴⁷ Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont. SAGE Qualitative Research Methods. (California: Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2010) Chapter (Re)Using Qualitative Data, 3.

⁴⁸ Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 101-102.

- Health impacts
- Women forced to flee
- Women and the contribution to conflict prevention and peace processes

3.2. Feminist curiosity

As I already stated in the introduction to this study I possess an inquisitive personality and curiosity regarding the surrounding world. When I started to conduct this study, I realized I have experienced a new kind of curiosity, a feminist curiosity. Cynthia Enloe reminds us of the importance of using feminist curiosity in her book: “The Curious Feminist : Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire”. Enloe describes feminist curiosity as a distinctive curiosity that begins with taking women seriously. This means listening carefully, digging deep, challenging assumptions, and welcoming surprises. Enloe continues about the importance of using feminist curiosity:

“Taking women - all sorts of women, in disparate times and places - seriously is not the same thing as valorizing women. Many women, of course, deserve praise, even awe; but many women we need to take seriously may appear too complicit in violence or in the oppression of others, or too cozily wrapped up in their relative privilege to inspire praise or compassion. Yet a feminist curiosity finds all women worth thinking about, paying close attention to, because in this way we will be able to throw into sharp relief the blatant and subtle political workings of both femininity and masculinity”.⁴⁹

Enloe insists that those seeking an in-depth understanding of the social and political world require a feminist curiosity. Feminist curiosity and theorisation also requires understanding of patriarchal structures. Enloe explains patriarchy as “the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity”. Patriarchy derives from the presumption that what is perceived as masculine is most deserving for admiration, agenda prioritisation, rewarding and budgetary line. Hence, patriarchal systems play a substantial role in marginalizing the feminine. By missing the

⁴⁹ Cynthia Enloe. *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3-4.

understanding of patriarchy operating as a major structure of power our explanations of how the world operates become unreliable.⁵⁰

Patriarchy is not just constructed by men nor just by the masculine.

“Patriarchal systems have been so enduring, so adaptable, precisely because they make many women overlook their own marginal positions and feel instead secure, protected, valued. Patriarchies –in militias, in labor unions, in nationalist movements, in political parties, in whole states and entire international institutions – may privilege masculinity, but they need the complex idea of femininity and enough women’s acceptance or complicity to operate” Enloe argues.

Therefore, the feminist curiosity is directed, in addition to the official and public discourses and behaviours, to the informal and private sphere.

“By taking women seriously in their myriad locations, feminists have been able to see patriarchy when everyone else has seen only capitalism or militarism or racism or imperialism” Enloe analyses.

Unless we seriously investigate we will never know if patriarchy is only a minor part of the explanation whilst in an other case patriarchy might play and hold the causal key.⁵¹

3.3. Feminist research and how it matters?

Feminist research and feminist theorizing is considered to have appeared in the international relations arena in the 1980s. The first phase of feminist research pondered where the women are in world politics and why they are forgotten. The goal of feminist research is to dismantle the gender hierarchies as well as the dominant norms and ideals surrounding world politics. Feminist research is driven by the desire for change, and in this sense feminist knowledge is motivated by political aspirations, namely the desire to put things into discussion, circulation and change. Hence, by methodologies and epistemologies that differ from mainstream research it enables for example to analyse the different roles and experiences of women and men in war and conflicts and its multiple

⁵⁰ Enloe, 4-5.

⁵¹ Enloe, 5-7.

effects. This can be seen as efforts to make women visible in questions which are commonly left outside traditional world politics.⁵²

Early feminist scholars and researchers began to ask new questions and develop new epistemological frameworks and research methods that valued women's life stories as knowledge and that took women's lives and experiences into account. Without underestimating the significance and importance of these early feminist research contributions, it is noteworthy that many pioneering feminists focused on women as a universal category. This early research overlooked the diversity among and between women's lives and lived experiences. Therefore, much of this early feminist research focused on issues of concern to white middle- and upper-class women and neglected the issues of importance to women of colour and working-class women. To achieve a comprehensive perspective that contemporary realities demand and to avoid the essentializing of women, feminist research should include and engage the voices of women worldwide not only of global élites. This collective examining enables us to gain a more complete, accurate and nuanced understanding of social reality.⁵³

In international relations, a theoretical hierarchical division exists between high politics and low politics. High politics, such as public life and state-level activities, are perceived as being more valuable than the "less important" low politics issues such as sexuality, gendered violence, environmental issues, economic and social inequalities. Feminist research unravels this division and demonstrates that issues considered low politics most certainly affect world politics. Feminist research has criticized the way in which the key concepts of world politics build and rely on masculine norms, values, experience and language.⁵⁴

Feminist research challenges the basic ideologies and structures that oppress women by documenting women's lives, experiences, concerns and subjugated knowledge, as well as illuminating gender-based stereotypes and biases. Feminist research goals usually foster empowerment and emancipation for women and the findings of feminist researchers are often applied in the service of promoting

⁵² Johanna Kantola and Johanna Valenius. "Maailmanpolitiikka" in Johanna Kantola, Johanna Valenius, and Anu Hirsiaho eds. *Toinen Maailmanpolitiikka: 10 Käsitettä Feministiseen Kansainvälisten Suhteiden Tutkimukseen*. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2007), 9 and Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner, and Jennifer Pedersen. *Handbook On Gender and War*. (Cheltenham, Glos ; Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 1 and Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. (2. ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 29 and Liljeström, 11, 15.

⁵³ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 29.

⁵⁴ Kantola and Valenius, 23,28.

social change and social justice for women.⁵⁵ Feminist research and activism have sought to influence, inter alia, local, national and international communities to recognize the gendered effects and consequences of wars. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is often mentioned as an intermediate result of this work.⁵⁶

In practical terms, instead of romanticized images that link women with an idealized peace, most feminist perspectives on peace and security seek a more robust definition as freedom from all sources of oppression. The evolution of feminist thinking about women and war can be explained by three distinct phases. Firstly, making women visible in the discussions of war. Secondly, focusing on 'gender' rather than 'women' and challenging the automatic association of women with peace and men with war. Thirdly, analysing of gender in relation to other identities and structured inequalities that shape and are shaped by war. Peace and feminist studies have many similarities, such as a shared commitment to an interdisciplinary methodology and similar normative orientations towards issues of conflict resolution and socioeconomic justice. Therefore, there is much to gain by incorporating gender analysis and feminist perspectives into peace studies subject matters.⁵⁷

By incorporating feminist theory and gender perspectives new critical questions can be asked: How do men and women experience war and peace in a different way? For whom is the peace and how will it be achieved? What might the world look like if we made women's concerns central rather than marginal? How might our understanding of power be changed if we consider ways in which women experience empowerment? What would we see as being important to achieve in the security domain if we prioritise issues women fear the most? Answering such questions have gendered the notions of war and peace, global politics, power and security, militarism and patriarchy amongst others. Furthermore, the answers have enabled mapping the different effects of men and women in conflict situations and the marginalisation and exclusion of women from the conflict resolution and peace processes as well as challenged polarised notions of war/peace, private/public and masculinity/femininity.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 4.

⁵⁶ Kirsi Mäki. "Sota" in Johanna Kantola, Johanna Valenius, and Anu Hirsiaho eds. *Toinen Maailmanpolitiikka: 10 Käsitettä Feministiseen Kansainvälisten Suhteiden Tutkimukseen*, 102.

⁵⁷ J. Ann Tickner. *A Feminist Voyage Through International Relations*. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27 and Sharoni, Welland, Steiner, and Pedersen, 1.

⁵⁸ Annika Björkdahl and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic. *Gender: The Missing Piece in the Peace Puzzle* in Richmond O.P., Pogodda S., Ramović J. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace*. (Palgrave Macmillan, London. 2016. 181-192), 181 and Jill

In general, feminist theories play an important role in producing alternative views using the multifaceted prism of gender to tell ensuing narratives. These alternative views go beyond the conceptions of traditional military configurations in international politics by providing ideas about co-operative security arrangements and non-state-centric security perspectives. However, these feminist perspectives which usually present very different accounts than those conventionally provided have often been ignored even if they are at the core of international politics and security issues.⁵⁹ Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry argue that

“Feminism at its best is not about claiming that women are less violent than men, or that women’s judgement is better than men’s. It is not about claiming that the world would be different if women ran it. Instead, it is about analysing manifestations of gender in global politics. Feminist do not claim that all women are innocent, or that women’s violence should be blamed on men’s oppression. Instead feminist scholarship uses gender as a category of analysis to complicate ideas of agency, interdependence and criminality”.⁶⁰

As explained in this sub chapter, feminist theoretical elements can be found in peace and conflict studies, international politics as well as security research. All these different disciplines take a stand on the role of gender in the concepts of war and peace. However, in this study I find it artificial to categorize the different disciplines as I think all of these research spheres fall more broadly within the limits of international politics where the concepts of gender, war and peace have a central role. Rather, I think that the distinction emerges from how the research questions are set.

3.4. Essentialist view, standpoint feminist view and post-modern feminist approach

According to the traditional mainstream research of international relations, humans are universal, gender-neutral figures. Therefore, women’s and men’s experiences are not thought to differ from each other. However, feminist theorizing offers three approaches through which this gender-

Stears, Lloyd Pettiford, Thomas Diez, and Imad El-Anis. *An Introduction to International Relations Theory: Perspectives and Themes*. (Pearson Education Limited. 3rd edition. 2010), 156.

⁵⁹ Annick T.R. Wibben. *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*/ Annick T. R. Wibben.(Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 5-7 and Marysia Zalewski.” *Feminist International Relations: Making sense...*” in Laura J. Shepherd. *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*. (Second edition. London: Routledge, 2015), 4.

⁶⁰ Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*. (London ; New York : New York: Zed Books ; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16.

neutrality can be questioned. Firstly, the essentialist view emphasizes the natural peacefulness and related features of women on which society and international relationships can be built. The second approach is the standpoint-feminist view which highlights women's experiences of war and peace and argues that these experiences should be at the centre of theorizing international relations. Post-modern feminist approach is the third approach and aims to dismantle both the masculine and feminine distinctions of war and peace and to pay attention to the feminine and masculine agencies that war and peace raise. The essentialist approach has been the starting point for two other approaches that have a critical relationship to essentialist thinking.⁶¹

With regard to the different trends and approaches in feminism, it should be noted that their borders are not firm and clear, but the boundaries are loose and emphasize things differently. In addition, also in reality the trends and approaches overlap each other. Indeed, Kantola and Valenius have dealt with feminism through different subject matters, concepts and methodologies, instead of focusing on the different approaches.⁶² I think it is of importance to note, as explained in the previous subchapter, that there is not one feminists approach or grand theory in the context of peace and war. Instead, as with almost all theorists, feminist approaches global politics from different perspectives. However, the common nominator of all feminist theories can be understood as “important contributors to a dialogue mutually interested in gender emancipation”⁶³.

Therefore, as a starting feminist researcher I find it more important to understand various feminist epistemologies and knowledge concepts in the context of my study rather than focusing on the different feminist approaches. Nonetheless, I find it important that everyone conducting feminist research should understand the basic starting points of the different approaches. Here it can be noted that the “Women, War and Peace” assessment, which is based on the experiences of women in conflict areas, relies on the standpoint feminist approach.

⁶¹ Tarja Väyrynen ”Rauha” in Johanna Kantola, Johanna Valenius, and Anu Hirsiäho eds. *Toinen Maailmanpolitiikka: 10 Käsitettä Feministiseen Kansainvälisten Suhteiden Tutkimukseen*, 119.

⁶² Kantola and Valenius, 22.

⁶³ Laura Sjoberg. *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 5.

3.5. Gender and how it relates to peace and war?

Feminist scholarship has shown how gender is integral to understand the nuances of peace and war. As a given point of departure for this study is to understand the notion of gender as a central system of power in all human activities.

Gender is a term used in contrast to sex. In stead of highlighting the biological differences between men and women, the term gender is to draw attention to the social roles and interactions between the two sexes. In addition to the biological sex we are born to, human activities emerge from the prevailing cultural gender norms in the society. Social gender includes the roles, rights and responsibilities inherent to gender, which determine behavioural patterns. Learning these behaviours is often so automated that people do not even notice or know about it. Social gender is thus learned, unlike the biological sex. Gender roles include the patterns in which the social categories of male and female interact and what various societies regard as appropriate and normal attitudes and behaviour for women and men. The categories and activities which determine for example the access to participation in political, cultural, and religious activities as well as resources and power. Social gender can change, and it is different in different cultures as well as in different periods of time.⁶⁴ Moreover, as societies values masculinity and femininity differently, gender also acts as basis of inequality between men and women.⁶⁵

How does gender relate to war? Despite the diversity of gender and of war separately, according to Joshua S. Goldstein gender roles in war are very consistent across all known human societies.⁶⁶ Culturally constructed gender identities enable war. Goldstein states:

“Causality runs both ways between war and gender. Gender roles adapt individuals for war roles, and war roles provide the context within which individuals are socialized into gender roles.”⁶⁷

Gender has always been central to the practice and representation of war, as well as to efforts to oppose war and rebuild societies in the aftermath of war. Aside from the biological sex of people who are part of the war scene, war is profoundly gendered at a symbolic level. War is associated with

⁶⁴ Joshua S. Goldstein. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vica Versa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2 and Cohn, 3-8.

⁶⁵ V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan. *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium*.(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 9.

⁶⁶ Goldstein, 3.

⁶⁷ Goldstein, 6.

action, courage, seriousness, destruction, weapons, violence, aggression, protection, domination, heroism, emotional control, discipline, adrenalin just to mention some. In most cultures these terms are coded with a masculine label. In contrast terms coded with a feminine label are associated with peace, softness, compromise, nonviolence, lack of action amongst others.⁶⁸

Many feminists argue that sex as male/female and gender as masculine/feminine are often framed as synonyms in security and policy discourses. This frame usually includes portraying, defining and stereotyping women as innocent of war.⁶⁹ In one of the classic feminist readings “Women and War” Jean Bethke Elshtain deals with these well established dichotomies of feminine and masculine stereotypes in global politics. Elshtain describes:

“ We in the west are the heirs of a tradition that assumes an affinity between women and peace, between men and war, a tradition that consists of culturally constructed and transmitted myths and memories. Thus, in time of war, real men and women – locked in a dense symbiosis, perceived as beings who have complementary needs and exemplify gender-specific virtues – take on, in cultural memory and narrative the personas of Just Warriors and Beautiful Souls”⁷⁰ and she continues “ for the most part, we accept some rough and ready division between male life takers and women life givers, a cleavage enshrined through such symbolic vehicles as Beautiful Soul and Just Warrior”⁷¹.

Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker approaches the “Beautiful soul” and “Just Warrior” narrative by photographic representation of humanitarian crises and how deeply gender stereotyping nature this kind of visual representation it is connected to. They describe:

“ Almost all disaster media coverage prominently features images of women and children in deep distress. They are depicted as emotional and passive, as

⁶⁸ Cohn, 12 and Sharoni, Welland, Steiner, and Pedersen, 1-2.

⁶⁹ Laura Sjoberg & Jessica Peet. A(nother) Dark Side of the Protection Racket, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2011/13:2, 167.

⁷⁰ Jean Bethke Elshtain. *Women and War*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

⁷¹ Elshtain, 165.

if they had no agency and were only waiting for rational men to rescue them.”⁷²

The sense of living and experiencing armed conflict defines generalisation. Every war and conflict has its own distinct characteristics. When thinking about the gender-power relations in this context, in some cases there are foundation for guarded optimism and in others cases it can be explained as near despair. Human beings adapts to new circumstances and environments and devises all kinds of manner and ways to secure survival, even in the most miserable situations. As Carol Cohn explains:

“Thus, understanding that there is great breadth and diversity of women’s experience of war is a critical first step, but we also need more than a catalogue of what women do and what happens to them. In order to understand the specificity and complexity of women’s different experiences of and actions in war, we need to start by understanding the context within which that experience is embedded, the series of interlocking systems, relationships, and processes which constitute the conditions under which women act. These include the gender systems within which women live; the specific kinds of wars being fought; and the wider set of actors and economic, political and social processes, from local to global, which shape both women’s lives and the societies within which they live before, during and after war.”⁷³

3.6. Gender lenses

One starting point to examine gender in global politics is the gender lenses approach. Jill Steans explains this approach as a method in which

“ to look at the world through gender lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes. Gender lenses also focus on

⁷² Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker in Shepherd, Laura J. *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*. (London: Routledge, 2015), 350.

⁷³ Cohn, 2.

the everyday experiences of women as women and highlight the consequences of their unequal social position”.⁷⁴

According to V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan lenses serve as filters. Lenses choose, sort and order what a person sees and understands. The lenses are used, consciously or unconsciously to foreground something, and to background something. Different lenses tell us different kind of stories and utilise different explanations to address the same issues. The power of gender acts as a meta-lens. By seeing global politics through a lens with a gender focus it facilitates the ability to observe realities alternative to those conventionally offered. By looking at global issues with gender lenses discharges the masculine viewpoints and perspectives which commonly dominate the discourse. This does not mean that it is solely women who are have the capacity of watching the world through gender lenses. A gender lens seeks for gender in the phenomena it studies and takes the gender it finds as a starting point for analysis. This methodological choice enables us to reveal the possible inherent gender subordination or subordinations.⁷⁵

Cynthia Enloe argues that we will never usefully understand armed conflicts and their consequences if we stubbornly focus our attention only on the immediate war scene. By using gender lenses, analysing among others refugee camps and peace negotiations, we might be able to find out the conditions and dynamics which set off the conflict in the first place.⁷⁶

3.6.1. Gender lenses on targeting civilians in conflict

While theorising the civilian targeting in conflicts the fundamental question is what are the belligerents trying to accomplish when intentionally targeting civilians? Moreover, when evaluating the civilian victimization through gender lenses the question is how gender weights into belligerents' decision to intentionally target civilians?

While evidence supports the simplistic answer of “ they are trying to win wars” the broader concept viewed with gender lenses of the civilian victimization can be explained by the “Just warrior” and “Beautiful Soul” notion. Laura Sjoberg and Jessica L. Peet argues that

⁷⁴ Jill Steans. *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 5.

⁷⁵ Peterson and Sisson Runyan, 38-40.

⁷⁶ Cynthia Enloe. ”Foreword: Gender Analysis Isn’t Easy” in Cohn, xv-xvi.

“Belligerents do not attack a gender-neutral category of “civilians” when they attack non-combatants. Instead, they attack women. Still, attacking women is not the whole story: belligerents attack women not as women but instrumentally as proxy for state and nation. This seems especially to be the case in the conflicts and wars in which complete defeat of the enemy is the ultimate goal in desperate situations.”⁷⁷

If women are the nation, men are to protect it. By using stereotypes of masculine heroism and the notions of Just Warriors and Beautiful Souls men are encouraged to fight.⁷⁸ If men are not fulfilling these gendered expectations they are shamed and feminized. Sjoberg and Peet describes feminization as

“To feminize something or someone is to directly subordinate that person, political entity, or idea, because values perceived as feminine are lower on the social hierarchy that values perceived as neutral or masculine.”

This kind of feminizing is also the strategy of belligerents.

“Belligerents seek to feminize other masculinities in conflict, maintaining power and control. One way they do this is to render opponents’ men incapable of performing their own masculinity by targeting, killing and humiliating “their” women.”⁷⁹

3.6.2. A gender lens on security

A gender lens on security critically examines the discourse on state, security and threats as it contains subtext which is deeply gendered. In this subtext the citizen role is mostly identified with men and masculine. As J. Ann Tickner argues

⁷⁷ Laura Sjoberg and Jessica L. Peet in Tickner, J. Ann, and Laura Sjoberg. *Feminism and International Relations: Conversations About the Past, Present, and Future*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 126, 130-131.

⁷⁸ Goldstein, 273.

⁷⁹ (1) Sjoberg and Peet, 129.

“any feminist perspective would argue that a truly comprehensive security cannot be achieved until gender relations of domination and subordination are eliminated”.⁸⁰

Women are less directly involved in violence as soldiers, but it does not exclude violence from their lives. On the contrary, their lives are affected by the consequences of conflicts and the political priorities of militarised societies as well as a mostly unprotected space: domestic violence. Until the gender relations of domination and subordination, and other hierarchies associated with race and class are dismantled, a truly comprehensive system of security is not achieved. Additionally, women need to have control over their own security.⁸¹

Feminist links the realisation of security with the respect of human rights of all people. Economic, political, social and personal circumstances might constitute obstacles for achieving genuine security. In the contemporary world well-being and security is influenced by a whole range of different factors as: human-rights abuse, global warming and climate change, the stability of the global economy, economical inequalities, political oppression and different kinds of conflicts to mention some. As an attempt to improve the security of women the international community has in the past three decades developed frameworks to respond to the violation of women’s human rights, including violence occurring in the private or domestic sphere.⁸² Therefore, the

“broadened and deepened security agenda centred around the concept of human security, meaning that security not only encompasses states but also individuals and groups. Human security is a concept that “gives political voice to the otherwise politically marginalized” and “forces us to address the broader contexts of vulnerability””.⁸³

With regard to security issues feminist points at the high level of civilian casualties and suffering in contemporary wars and are of particular concern with what goes on during wars. The feminist concern is especially pointing at the impact of war on women and civilians more generally. According to J. Ann Tickner

⁸⁰ J Ann. Tickner. *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives On Achieving Global Security*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 23.

⁸¹ Tickner (1992), 30.

⁸² Steans, Pettiford, Diez and El-Anis, 156, 176.

⁸³ Björkdahl and Selimovic, 187.

“ Whereas conventional security studies has tended to look at causes and consequences of wars from a top-down, or structural, perspective, feminist have generally taken a bottom-up approach, analysing the impact of war at microlevel. By so doing, as well as adopting gender as a category of analysis, feminist believe they can tell us something new about the causes of war that is missing from both conventional and critical perspectives. By crossing what many feminist believe to be mutually constitutive levels of analysis, we get a better understanding of the relationship between all forms of violence and the extent to which unjust social relations, including gender hierarchies, contribute to insecurity, broadly defined”.⁸⁴

One form of the violence feminist has drawn attention to is the notion of sexual war time violence which is an effective and extreme form of patriarchal control. Sexual violence against women in wartime has existed since human beings have been fighting with each other⁸⁵. Sexual war time violence has many dimensions, depending on the type of conflict and the patterns of violence used. Sexual violence can amongst other mean opportunistic or systematic tactic rape and an experience “which is almost exclusively reserved for those persons biologically classifiable as female, and exclusively for those who are gendered female (or feminized) in political and social relations.”⁸⁶

Rape in war frequently involves even increased sadism. This increase can be experienced as additional abuses where men are forced to watch their wife and daughters raped or forcing women to engage in sex with their own sons, brothers or other family members. According to MacKinnon the rape of female civilians is:

“a humiliation rite for the men on the other side who cannot (in masculinity's terms) ‘protect’ their women. Many of these acts make women's bodies into a medium of men's expression, the means through which one group of men says what it wants to say to another”⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ J. Ann Tickner. *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-cold War Era*. (New York : Columbia University Press, 2001), 48-49.

⁸⁵ Pamela DeLargy. ”Sexual Violence and Women’s Health in War” in Cohn, 55.

⁸⁶ DeLargy, 56. and Sjoberg, Laura and Peet, Jessica L. In Tickner, J. Ann, and Laura Sjoberg. *Feminism and International Relations: Conversations About the Past, Present, and Future*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 133.

⁸⁷ MacKinnon, Catherine. 2006, *Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2006), 223.

One of the dimensions of sexual violence and wartime rape in the gender discourse includes the visibility it might gain in the peace and justice processes and is hence moved into the public sphere. For women this does not necessarily mean end of violence. Annika Björkdahl and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic explains the phenomena as

”one form of violence that depicts the continuities of war as it spills over into peacetime while becoming invisible as it travels from the public back to the private sphere in the shape of increased domestic violence”.⁸⁸

3.6.3. Viewing peace through a gender lens

While discussed by academics, politicians, journalists, as well as activists, it is frequently assumed that everyone knows what ‘peace’ is. Hence, the word is commonly left undefined. Focusing to the meaning of the term “peace” it can be defined as introduced by one of the founders and main figure in peace research, Johan Galtung. Galtung’s conception includes positive and negative peace. The notion of “negative peace” is used to explain absence or end of widespread violence which is associated with conflict and war. Therefore, a “peaceful” society in this view may consist of a society where social violence and/or structural violence are prevalent.⁸⁹

Viewing peace through gendered lenses opens space for Galtung’s alternative vision of peace. Galtung’s vision of “positive peace” demand that every type of violence is to be tenuous and that the major potential reasons of future conflicts are eliminated. “Positive peace” covers an ideal of how societies should be developed and this kind of society is characterised to include democratic political processes and structures, an accountable and open government as well as an egalitarian and active civil society.⁹⁰

Even though Galtung’s definitions of peace were not taking gender into account, he certainly opened up the space for discussion with regard to the term “positive peace”. Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic gives an explanation how gender lenses can define “positive peace”:

”But as Galtung privileges structure, less attention is devoted to agents of peace. In contrast to most models of peace which locate themselves at the macro-level, feminist notions often turn the conceptualisation of peace

⁸⁸ Björkdahl and Selimovic, 185-186.

⁸⁹ Johan Galtung. “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.” *Journal of Peace Research* 1969/6:3: 183-186.

⁹⁰ Galtung, 183-186.

upside-down by locating peace at the micro-level in the everyday. Gendered readings of positive peace expand the conceptualisation of peace to foreground gender hierarchies, disclose relations of subordination, and reveal the continuities of violence, while highlighting various agencies of peace.”⁹¹

3.6.4. Gender lenses look at war and conflict

Wars and conflicts are a diverse phenomenon. They vary along many dimensions they are embedded in: the political motivations and goals, the global economic and political relationships, the weapons, tactics and strategies employed, the kinds of militaries and armed groups and other actors involved engaged in the hostilities, as well as the resources available to recover from war and conflict.⁹²

Mary Kaldor divides wars into new and old wars in her work “New&old wars: organised violence in a global era”. Kaldor is using the end of the Cold War as a timely water divider and she argues that violence has shifted from primarily international state-oriented war to a series of hybrid or “low intensity” conflicts that involve paramilitaries, private contractors and illegal sponsors. However, since the end of the Cold War millions of people have died and millions have become refugees as a result of wars and conflicts.⁹³

Instead of wars between traditional states, it has become a new type of organized violence that she calls new wars. Kaldor describes these new wars as a mixture of war, organized crime and massive human rights violations. New wars are both global and local, both public and private. War is being pursued to achieve certain identified political goals using the tactic of terror and instability. Warfare methods that are used are such that have theoretically been declared as illegal in modern warfare rules. Crucially, civilians are rational targets for such new wars, instead of being unintended collateral damage. Often the political leaders and international organizations have been helpless in front of resolving the hostilities.⁹⁴

In this study I reserve the terms “wars and conflict” to refer to violent, destructive disputes between any armed parties. My definition of a conflict does not make a distinction between conflicts where the state is a party and violence where state is not involved as a conflicting party nor how many annual

⁹¹ Björkdahl and Selimovic, 184.

⁹² Cohn, 24-27.

⁹³ Mary Kaldor. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 1-2.

⁹⁴ Kaldor, 7-10.

casualties the conflict have witnessed. Statistics are an important, but inadequate indicator of the human, gender-based suffering in wars and conflict. For this study statistics are of less importance as the goal is to understand the phenomena in the way the research questions are set. This approach is also in line with the approach applied in the special expert's assessment.

3.6.5. Empowerment and gender lenses

Empowerment as a multilevel construct and process that enables people, communities and organisations to gain mastery over issues of concern to them. Empowerment is constructed of interdependent elements and integrated perceptions of personal control. Empowerment is a process of collective dialogue proactive approach towards life as well as critical understanding of the surrounding socio-political environment. The outcome of empowerment aims at social action that is meant to effect positive changes.⁹⁵

Zimmermann continues by explaining the empowering processes as

“... people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives. They are a series of experiences in which individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goal and a sense of how to achieve them, gain greater access to and control over resources, and where people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives.”⁹⁶

Empowering women is a widely acknowledged important goal in international development. Anju Malhorta and Sidney Ruth Schuler argue that women's empowerment includes three additional unique elements if compared to other disadvantaged or socially excluded groups:

“First, women are not just one group among various disempowered subsets of society (the poor, ethnic minorities, and so on); they are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with all these other groups. Second, household and interfamilial relations are a central locus of women's disempowerment in a way that is not true for other disadvantaged groups.

⁹⁵ Carr E. Summerson. "Rethinking Empowerment Theory using a Feminist Lens: The Importance of Process." *Affilia* 18, no. 1/2003: 9,18 and Marc A. Zimmerman. "Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 1995/ 23(5): 581-582.

⁹⁶ Zimmerman, 583.

This means that efforts at empowering women must be especially cognizant of the household-level implications of broader policy action. Third, it can be argued that while empowerment in general requires institutional transformation, women's empowerment requires systemic transformation not just of any institutions, but specifically of those supporting patriarchal structures."⁹⁷

Deepa Narayan analyses also this aspect. Regardless that empowerment can be seen as a universal phenomenon, the cultural context is not to be forgotten. The cultural context is important as it is composed of a interdependent system of beliefs, norms and values.⁹⁸ The concept of women's empowerment include the process itself and women's agency. Malhorta and Schuler explain this agency by describing the important role of multilateral organisations and governments to foster and promote policies that reinforce gender equality through various means. However, as the essence of women's empowerment they highlight the agency:

"Thus while resources—economic, social, and political—are often critical in ensuring that women are empowered, they are not by themselves sufficient. Without women's individual or collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interests, resources cannot bring about empowerment ... There are many examples in the literature showing that women's access to resources does not necessarily lead to their greater control over resources, that changes in legal statutes often have little influence on practice, and that female political leaders do not always work to promote women's interests."⁹⁹

Usually a wide transformation and change of social and cultural norms requires a long period of time. However, these deep rooted norms can be changed radically in short periods of time in specific context, as for example in war and conflict situations.

"Depending on the dimension of empowerment, the context, and the type of social, economic, or policy catalyst, women may become empowered in some

⁹⁷ Anju Malhorta and Sidney Ruth Schuler. "Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development" in Deepa Narayan eds. *Measuring Empowerment. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives.* (The World Bank, Washington, 2005), 71-72.

⁹⁸ Deepa Narayan. "Conceptual Framework and Methodological Challenges" in Deepa Narayan, eds.. *Measuring Empowerment. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives.* (The World Bank, Washington, 2005), 16.

⁹⁹ Malhorta and Schuler, 73.

aspects of their lives in a relatively short period of time (say one to three years), while other changes may evolve over decades. For policy and programmatic action, defining success or failure depends upon specifying the aspects of women's empowerment that are expected to change, as well as the time period required for change to occur at a level that can be measured."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Malhorta and Schuler, 80.

4. Content analysis findings: description, analysis and synthesis

As described earlier my research material comprises of “Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peacebuilding ” by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the systematic literature analysis and to cluster the findings with the theoretical framework of my study. To facilitate the reading I have mostly used the term ”the experts”, which in this connection refers to Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The provided quotations exemplify the analysed research material and are thus only extracts of all the analysed material.

The five themes are presented in the following order: 1. The “beautiful soul” narrative, gaining knowledge and changing policies, 2. Violence against women in conflict, 3. Health impacts, 4. Women forced to flee, 5. Women and the contribution to conflict prevention and peace processes.

4.1. The “beautiful soul” narrative, gaining knowledge and changing policies

For the vast majority affected by war, conflict is not just played out in the firing of gunshots and the dropping of bombs. It is also played out in the disruption of lives and childhoods, the scarcity of food and resources, in sexual violence and economic devastation. According to the independent experts’ assessment the media too often portrays women as victims rather than activists or analysts. “Apart from sexual violence and victimization, the mainstream media rarely considers women newsworthy in their varied roles in the peacekeeping and conflict resolution processes.”¹⁰¹

This is the portraying and model where Jean Bethke Elshtain’s “Beautiful soul” and “Just-warrior” stereotypes play the lead. The “Beautiful soul” narrative might limit our understanding of women’s capacities in the context of peace and war. Recognising that women are often targets and victims in the war scene and uninvolved in the decisions to fighting and peacebuilding should not hinder us seeing the variety of different roles that women play in the framework of peace and war. The gender lenses approach facilitates the process of understanding the lived experiences, complexity and multiple roles women might possess instead of just keeping the one-dimensional story of women as victims and “Beautiful souls” in need of protection. By using the gender lenses we can see that type-

¹⁰¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 103-104.

casting women as only victims and in need of protection the subordinated role is highlighted as the “Just warrior” is there to “protect”.

Nadine Puechguirbal raises a challenge feminist scholars have begun to study in relation to United Nation documents. She states that the way women are defined in official documents as civilians, victims, vulnerable and associated with children is in addition to essentialising women also undermines women’s agency. “References in UN-related documents to women as actors or agents of change for peace have increased, but the question remains of why the pattern of ‘women and children’ is still prominent in these texts” Puechguirbal conclude.¹⁰²

The assessment is not claiming universal innocence of women, nor is it arguing that men are more warlike and women inherently more peaceful. The experts found it difficult to describe the atrocities women experience in war so that women would not be automatically connected with characteristics of passivity and helplessness. To avoid these kinds of stereotypes the experts explains the concept of gender:

”Conflict can change traditional gender roles; women may acquire more mobility, resources, and opportunities for leadership. But the additional responsibility comes without any diminution in the demands of their traditional roles. Thus, the momentary space in which women take on non-traditional roles and typically assume much greater responsibilities – within the household and public arenas – does not necessarily advance gender equality.”¹⁰³

Despite the horrors women are facing the assessment also highlights that women in conflict areas have not given up hope of transformation. It is that hope that drives their determination to throw off the mantle of victimization.

“That women are surviving horror and rebuilding war-torn societies in ingenious and creative ways is indeed worth celebrating and documenting. That women have no choice but to do so, and that their under-resourced

¹⁰² Nadine Puechguirbal. Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents. *International Peacekeeping*, 2010/17:2: 172-173.

¹⁰³ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 1-2.

peace-building efforts are not acknowledged or funded, is yet another layer of injustice”, the Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf assess.¹⁰⁴

How to change the misleading stereotyping picture of women in the context of peace and war? In the first sentence of the report the experts write that it is hard to imagine a world without war. Everyday we can hear news about conflicts and old grievances escalating violently. Many of the girls and women who have contributed with their story to the content of the assessment have not experienced any other state of living than war and/or conflict. The experts continue that the women who have shared their experience in this report hope that their voices would be heard and the world would listen.¹⁰⁵

Rehn and Sirleaf-Johnson asks “How could we possibly improve their lives?”. According to the experts’ the answer is partly depending on how the testimony, in this case, the analysis formed into the special experts assessment is received and acted upon by the international community.¹⁰⁶ When the experts visited Rwanda, it was eight years after the genocide. During their visit they met women who where almost a decade after the tragedy trying to come to terms with what they had experienced.

“We feel great pain to know that our attackers, the people who killed our husbands and male relatives, who tortured, raped and mutilated us, have not been punished,” a young woman told us. “Many of these people are in exile. It is as if they are being rewarded for the crimes that they committed. They deserve to be punished. And what is happening to us here? We have been reduced to suffering, begging and misery. It is as if we are the guilty ones. We would like you to be a voice for us, by asking the United Nations and the international community for justice. Then we can rebuild our lives.”¹⁰⁷

Despite the persisting “Beautiful soul” and “Just warrior” stereotyping it is according to Kirsi Mäki through western feminist networks that the question of gendered influences and consequences of wars have gained attention in the international media and the agendas of international organizations. The gendered impacts of wars have also been a standard subject in feminist research journals. Mäki continues that this has in some cases led to criticism of women living in the conflict areas. These

¹⁰⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 95.

women are experiencing being objects in a sense of “research tourism”. Researchers are asking them intimate and salient aspects of their lives, but after that, the women do not know what is happening to this material and moreover they have not, in their daily lives, been able to benefit from this research.¹⁰⁸

The experts’ states that the heart of the gendered debate in conflict situations is that women’s voices are heard and their work on the ground is recognized, valued and supported. For achieving this operational and political actions are needed.¹⁰⁹ However, the question of “research tourism” is also raised in the special experts report.

“Many people have acquired their PhDs studying us, but no one helps us,” one woman said bitterly. “We have no rights, and those who should help do not want to. We are slowly dying. No one who was not in Srebrenica can know what we have lived through – how difficult it was to watch people die of hunger, children going from house to house asking for bread, so exhausted that there was no light in their eyes. We have to go on with our lives, but how? I had two beautiful sons and a husband; now I have nothing.”¹¹⁰

In their recommendations, the experts convey the message on the conflict affected women’s call to the international community and governments to assist in stopping the violence. The call includes the notions of adoption and vigorous enforcing the adopted laws aimed at protecting women and ensuring their human rights. The experts also demand a necessary presence of women in peace negotiations and a more significant role for women in peacebuilding, peacekeeping missions, reconstruction processes and humanitarian interventions. A recommendation of establishing an international Truth and Reconciliation Commission is presented as well as admitted presence in legislature processes. The experts also call for more women to be appointed to United Nations diplomatic and peacekeeping posts as well as appointment of more female candidates in post-conflict elections.¹¹¹

Susan Willet explains that the existing attempts to mainstream gender within the United Nations and its member states seldom touches the institutional inequalities and power relations.

¹⁰⁸ Mäki, 111-112.

¹⁰⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 6.

¹¹⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 41.

¹¹¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, x-xii.

“ Rather, gender mainstreaming has been grafted onto existing power structures that are circumscribed by the essentialist nature of binary opposites in which gender has been interpreted as women, and women remain differentiated from men. The portrayal of women as victims in need of protection persists, while men are constructed as protectors and policymakers. Meanwhile, women’s active roles in conflict resolution and peacemaking continue to be idealized and undervalued. Through these discursive strategies women have been assigned a certain type of agency and identity, namely as the objects of protective action.”¹¹²

According to Willett when gender mainstreaming is constructed like this, there is little space for gender mainstreaming to challenge the epistemological foundation of the dominant masculine and militaristic discourse. She continues by arguing that instead gender mainstreaming rather acts to accommodate space for alternative voices and claiming inclusiveness, when actually gender mainstreaming operates as compromising dissident and makes women’s actions and voices invalid.¹¹³ Willett analyses that “gender mainstreaming is effective in the preparatory phase of programming and planning, but less so in the implementation and monitoring phase”¹¹⁴.

4.2. Violence against women in conflict

” Wombs punctured with guns. Women raped and tortured in front of their husbands and children. Rifles forced into vaginas. Pregnant women beaten to induce miscarriages. Foetuses ripped from wombs. Women kidnapped, blindfolded and beaten on their way to work or school. We saw the scars, the pain and the humiliation. We heard accounts of gang rapes, rape camps and mutilation. Of murder and sexual slavery. We saw the scars of brutality so extreme that survival seemed for some a worse fate than death.”¹¹⁵

The term “ violence against women in conflict”, as used in this independent experts’ assessment, refers to experiences which the experts’ describe as ”one of the history’s great silences”¹¹⁶. The acts

¹¹² Susan Willett. Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: Assessing the Impact on Women, Peace and Security. *International Peacekeeping* 2010/17:2,:144,.

¹¹³ Willett, 144.

¹¹⁴ Willett, 150.

¹¹⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 9.

¹¹⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 10.

that are targeted on the basis of gender identity include rape, sexual slavery and trafficking, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced miscarry, forced marriage and domestic violence. According to the assessment the social status of women is not affecting the experienced violence and exploitation. "During conflict women and girls are attacked because they are related to political adversaries, because they are political leaders themselves, or simply because they were at home when the soldiers arrived"¹¹⁷.

Armed conflicts ordinarily bring harm to anyone and civilians have always suffered in war. As Mary Kaldor describes the contemporary wars and conflicts as a mixture of war, organized crime and massive human rights violation, in which the use of tactic of terror and instability are common. Sexual violence in war and conflict should be classified as intentional civilian targeting and victimization, which in most cases have gendered implications of sex-specific tactics like wartime rape.

An UN official the experts interviewed in the Democratic Republic of Congo explained to the experts:

"From Pweto down near the Zambian border right up to Aru on the Sudan/Uganda border, it's a black hole where no one is safe and where no outsider goes. Women take a risk when they go out to the fields or on a road to a market. Any day they can be stripped naked, humiliated and raped in public. Many, many people no longer sleep at home, though sleeping in the bush is equally unsafe. Every night there is another village attacked, burned and emptied. It could be any group, no one knows, but always they take women and girls away."¹¹⁸

MacKinnon explained rape of female civilians as a humiliation rite for the enemy's men¹¹⁹ and this is also highlighted in the experts' assessment. "Women are raped as a way to humiliate the men they are related to, who are often forced to watch the assault"¹²⁰ the experts' describe.

Virtually all feminists agree that rape and violence against women is a severe wrong, which is too often ignored, mischaracterized and legitimized. Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf describes the extreme violence that women suffer during conflict from a wider perspective. The atrocities arise from the violence that also exists in women's lives during peacetime, predominantly from the domestic

¹¹⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirlef, 11.

¹¹⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 11.

¹¹⁹ MacKinnon, 223.

¹²⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 10.

violence. Globally, women experience violence because they are women. Women become victims for the reason that women lack the same rights and autonomy as men have. As much of the violence against women goes largely unpunished, it has become an accepted norm and escalates sharply during conflicts as violence generally increases.

“Militarization and the presence of weapons legitimize new levels of brutality and even greater levels of impunity. Often this escalating violence become a new “norm”, which continue into the post-conflict period, where chaos adds to the many frustrations that were not solved by war” the experts’ remark.¹²¹

Another dimension of sexual violence during conflicts includes sexual slavery. It can mean abduction of women or girls to cook and provide sexual services for non-state armed groups. It can also mean abduction by others than armed groups. Women and girls might face sexual exploitation in exchange of humanitarian relief or protection by government officials, civilian authorities, aid workers or even by their own family members. One of the filthiest form of sexual exploitation is conducted by those who are there to protect and secure: the UN peacekeeping personnel. Although the majority of peacekeeping troops perform their duties with professionalism, cases of sexual violence and exploitation by UN peacekeepers have been recorded and documented.¹²² According to the assessment sexual violence and prostitution, especially child prostitution, at times increase with the arrival of UN troops.¹²³

“I am the only person who has an income in my family,” a 19-year-old commercial sex worker told us in Freetown (Sierra Leone). “Since UNAMSIL’s arrival, I have been able to make enough money to support my family. My clients are mainly peacekeepers. Of course I do not like to trade my body for money, but what choice do I have?”¹²⁴.

This is just one of the statements of the thousands of young girls who are mostly forced into prostitution in the conflict torn regions.

The term “ violence against women in conflict” also encompasses trafficking in human beings when committed in situations of conflict for the purpose of forced labour schemes which often include

¹²¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 10-11.

¹²² Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 61-62, 70.

¹²³ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 10-12.

¹²⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 71.

sexual violence and exploitation. While trafficking for sexual exploitation might be the first presentation of trafficking people think of, it actually takes diverse forms in conflict situations.

As trafficking in human beings generally, trafficking in conflict situations is also multifaceted and transnational. Women and girls are trafficked both into and out of conflict zones. The increasing risks of trafficking in conflict arise for many reasons such as increasingly desperate economic circumstances, the weakening or even breakdown of rule of law and border control combined with globalization's open borders and free markets. In these circumstances women are more likely to look for opportunities that entail risky situations or illicit economies, which are often home to traffickers.¹²⁵

“The connection between armed conflict and trafficking in women is becoming increasingly apparent as criminal networks involved in the trade of arms and drugs expand to include trafficking in people. Trafficked women may become workers in illegal factories, or virtual slave labour for wealthy families in the countries to which they are brought. A large number of trafficked women and girls are forced into prostitution; many of them are barely adolescents” the experts describe.¹²⁶

One example explained of the phenomena between conflict and trafficking in the report is from Southeast Europe. During and in the aftermath of the war in former Yugoslavia, southeast Europe was identified as a source of trafficked women as well as a major transit route for traffickers. According to data from a UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) seventy-five per cent of the women trafficked through the area leave their homes in urban or rural areas with a false job offer. The rest are kidnapped or agree to become sex workers, but eventually become forced into sexual slavery. Sixty per cent of these trafficked women are between 19 to 24 years.

“ There have been reports of women being stripped naked and forced to walk on a table or platform while brothel owners bid for them. The stories are monstrous, and the problem is probably even more serious than we know," Macedonia's Public Prosecutor told the experts.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 11-14.

¹²⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 12.

¹²⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 13.

Based on the analysed material and by using the gender lenses approach we can understand the dangers for their security and the violence women face in war and conflict. Despite their civilian status, women are specific targets and victims of attack. Women's experiences of violence are multifaceted. They can be harmed by the enemy, by armed groups, by family members and by patriarchal traditional practices, culture, and poverty. Although more men die in battle than women, women and girls are deliberately targeted for and victims of rape, sexual slavery and trafficking, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced miscarry, forced marriage as well as domestic violence in the conflict zone. The experts' describes the violence women faces as one of the history's great silences. My argument is that in the contemporary world the international community has the knowledge of this inevitable feature of conflict. However, the question remains, where is the will, power and tools to act and intervene?

4.3. Health impacts

Suffering, diseases and possibly death is an inevitable result of war. These affect not only soldiers but also civilians. Suffering is a dehumanising experience with pain and sorrow. The health impact of both men and women surviving war and conflict can be disastrous. Beyond the physical injuries, war and conflict can produce mental health problems. There are also health implications as consequence of health system malfunction and collapse, as well as population movements. Rape and all forms of gender-based violence continue to be an ongoing threat in erratic regions. The effects of any kind of violence can be long-lasting and devastating and can especially be dangerous to a woman's reproductive health.¹²⁸

Women's reproductive health can be endangered both directly and indirectly in conflict settings. It is not only the lack of access to appropriate medical care needed during pregnancy and delivery, but also the exposure to violence and trauma that may have an effect to poor pregnancy outcomes. Unplanned and unwanted pregnancy can present severe problems and challenges for women in any situation. However, it can be even more stressful for a women displaced and separated from family and support systems. The war strategy of ethnic cleansing by forcibly impregnating women has occurred at least in the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, East Timor, Kosovo, Rwanda and Sudan. Tens of thousands of women in this regions and also elsewhere have suffered and experienced the

¹²⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 33, 40-42.

trauma left by repeated rapes and impregnation by the rapist. The psychosocial needs of these women require particularly sensitive responses.¹²⁹

Rape might leave a victim with no visible injuries, but all forms of sexual exploitation reverberates through generations. The trauma, both physical and mental, can be enduring and agonizing. As mentioned above raped women sometimes have also to deal with an unwanted pregnancy and have no choice but to continue with the pregnancy. Some women may reject their children born of sexual violence and exploitation because the children are a constant reminder of the horror they have experienced. Nonetheless, in countless cases women accept these children. As in East Timor, Lorena in her early twenties, is raising her son conceived when she was raped by militia in a refugee camp. "I have to accept the baby," she said. "Because of the war, that's what happened."¹³⁰ Some victims suffering from sexual violence might experience the "double violation" whereby victims encounter stigma and are disowned by their families and communities.¹³¹ Most rape victims keep quiet as they fear stigma or reprisal and rape is often a taboo subject. The targets of rape become hidden victims.¹³²

In every society women usually carry the burden of caring for others, within or outside the family. This does not change in hostile environments and the responsibility to care for others is so embedded that even under desperate circumstances, women yet try to take care of people around them.

"In our travels, we heard about the despair women felt when they watched their loved ones suffer or die, when their children were abused or starved or when they had to leave elderly relatives behind as they ran for their own lives. The guilt and helplessness that the women felt in these situations, and still feel, is an almost unbearable burden".

This burden of care for others in itself is stressful and might contribute to serious illness.¹³³

This burden of care can also be interlinked with disempowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations as it might heavily add the workload of women.

"One woman whose child had been severely disabled by a landmine told us that her whole day is taken up with feeding and washing the child and helping

¹²⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 38.

¹³⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 16.

¹³¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 14.

¹³² Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 39.

¹³³ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 33, 42.

him learn how to read, which she sees as his only hope of relief from his disability. Other women spoke of trying to keep the peace in households where husbands are depressed and drink too much, lashing out at their children. Still others spend hours lining up to get food for their families or offer sex to strangers for the money to buy medicine. Truly the time and the emotional energy these women spend on caring for others is incalculable” the experts writes.¹³⁴

Many women and girls in countries of conflict suffer additionally to violence also the devastating effect of HIV/AIDS. Women face special risks to this “hidden killer” as women are already biologically more vulnerable to become infected. Armed conflicts fuel the spread of HIV in many ways, both directly and indirectly. The HIV transmission, as well as other sexually transmitted infections, is influenced by a interdependent set of social factors and women’s position in social structures increases the vulnerability. An additional contributing factor is rape and other human rights abuses that proliferate during time of conflict. In the most cruel examples, as in Rwanda, the purposeful spread of HIV infection of women has been used as a tool of ethnic warfare.¹³⁵

A major problem with HIV/AIDS is that even after the conflict has settled down the infection stays. The report tells about a general who told the experts ”The war now is with AIDS – but it was easier to get guns than it is to get the tools to fight AIDS”.¹³⁶ Moreover, the disempowerment which is a consequence of conflict situations often leaves women and girls destitute. In many cases, trading sex for survival becomes the only option.¹³⁷

“When sex is used as a commodity, women and girls have little negotiating power over the use of condoms – and an offer of more money from men who don’t want to use protection is all too difficult to refuse” the experts conclude.¹³⁸

The assessment also narrates how aim can be good, but reality forces to desperate actions. For example, in Sierra Leone the Women in Crisis Movement provided literacy and vocational training, HIV prevention skills and treatment of STI for young women driven into the sex trade in Freetown.

¹³⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 42.

¹³⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf , 48-49.

¹³⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf , 54.

¹³⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 48-49.

¹³⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 52.

Nonetheless, despite the skills the young women are learning and the sense of belonging that the movement has provided, it is not until the the women can establish sustainable businesses they can be empowered to have more impact on their lives and diminish the risk of exploitation and of HIV/AIDS. As one member of the movement told the experts:

“ We are trying to rebuild our lives after so many bad experiences and this project is helping us do that. But so much depends on being able to get food, transport and housing – most of us don’t even have the basic things so many still do sex just to survive.”¹³⁹

Empowering women with knowledge and awareness of HIV prevention and with the skills to negotiate their relationships is critical to ensuring their later health¹⁴⁰. Nonetheless, the report also explains how war and conflict can disturb settings where HIV prevention programmes have been well established and women have reached some level of equality. War usually severely disrupts the health infrastructure and causes shortages of supplies, such as STI treatment drugs and condoms. “This lack of services, combined with poverty, can severely limit women’s abilities to control their exposure to HIV. As one refugee told the experts:

“ I know all about AIDS because we had a big prevention programme back home. All of us here know how you get it and how to keep from getting it. Lots of people started using condoms back home. But here in this camp¹⁴¹, they aren’t always available and in the city they are expensive – so what should we do? Sometimes my husband and I are together without protection even when we know better.”¹⁴²

The examples above indicate that conflicts and war are a constant threat to physical and psychological well-being. A unique gender specific vulnerability which affects women, or the feminized, is the trauma and stigma caused by sexual violence as well as the increased domestic violence. Moreover, due to traditional gender roles women often take some additional burden for caring about the family and the community. Certainly the mental and physical health of individuals and communities are extremely important for peace building and recovery.

¹³⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 50.

¹⁴⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 57.

¹⁴¹ ”Camp” in this contexts refers to a refuge camp or camp for internally displaced persons.

¹⁴² Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 51.

4.4. Women forced to flee

Armed conflicts, civil unrest and political violence are more and more destructively impacting on the lives of women and girls who are often forced to flee their homes. According to UNHCR data from 2016 we live in a world where nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution¹⁴³.

“Communities are being torn apart by the routine tactics of war. Intimidation, terror, murder, sexual violence and forced displacement drive people out of their homes, leaving them without food, shelter or health care. This is often not an indirect effect of war but a careful calculation by combatants” the experts’ argue.¹⁴⁴

In many cases large camps provides shelter for millions of people fleeing armed conflicts. These people can either be international refugees or internally displaced persons. In many conflicts, the same conflict can create both refugees and internally displaced persons. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) might face more risks than refugees due to that they are not protected under legal recourse of 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as they are uprooted within their own country and therefore not refugees..

Since refugees and displaced persons are vulnerable from a socio- economic and cultural standpoint, displacement has also specific gender dimension as all aspects of war. The experts’ summarizes the situation:

“Women are more likely to end up as displaced persons and to become the sole caretaker for children. Women and girls have to learn to cope as heads of household, often in environments where, even in peacetime, a woman on her own has few rights. And having fled, they may find themselves vulnerable to attacks and rape while they are escaping and even when they find refuge. They may become trapped between opposing factions in areas where there is no humanitarian access. In a hostile environment, without access to basic services, women are expected to provide the necessities for themselves and their families. After talking to women in many different countries, we learned

¹⁴³ UNHCR. Figures at a glance. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>. Accessed 21.11.2017.

¹⁴⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 19.

that this may mean being forced to provide sexual services in return for assistance or protection. Other times women may have no choice but to become prostitutes in order to support their families.”¹⁴⁵

The camps for displaced people should present help, shelter and a safe haven for persons in desperate situations. However, for women the camps can become extremely dangerous. Male hegemony prevails in the camps for refugees and internally displaced persons and this provides few opportunities for women to be heard. It also perpetuates the disempowerment of women. The violence does not necessary finish after the women arrives at the camps. Rapes occur frequently and the demands for sexual favours from women for all manner of aid are common. Domestic violence is also a serious problem. The experts write about a meeting at the Gihembe refugee camp in Rwanda where they met Congolese women and talked about the domestic violence they saw everywhere.

““There can be conflict in the household. For instance, if I sell part of the camp rations to get food for a younger child, the husband will blame me if he is hungry, or he will take a young wife in the camp,” Ephrace, a farmer, told us. “The violence we have here only arises because of the way we are living here in promiscuity and poverty,” added Suzanne, an older woman wrapped in a thin faded cotton cloth. But a third woman said the problem was not only in the camps. When she spoke of what she wanted for the future, the group of sixty or seventy women sitting on their wooden benches all nodded vigorously. “Once our children are educated, the girls will know they do not have to submit to violence in order to have a husband.””¹⁴⁶

4.5. Women and the aftermath of conflicts

While assessing the role of women in peace building efforts the experts’ reminds the readers of history. In April 1915, amid the surrounding warfare, over 1000 women activist from twelve warring and neutral countries met in The Hague to object to the ongoing World War I and to promote the radical idea that international disputes should be resolved by negotiation. This meeting was the first historical gathering of the International Congress of Women (ICW). The ICW compiled a plan of action which

¹⁴⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 19-20.

¹⁴⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 23-25.

“did not simply call for universal disarmament and an end to the war. It demanded equality between women and men and among nations, and the creation of a non-partisan international organization to mediate disputes between countries”.¹⁴⁷

The ICW sent thirty delegates to take their programme to end the war through mediation to influential leaders in the European and US governments. The women urged the political leaders to end the war. Although each statesman declared himself sympathetic, not one would take the first step. However, US president Woodrow Wilson adopted many of their proposals in his "Fourteen Points" speech, which he took to the Versailles talks that terminated the devastating war. Later on the ICW participants formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), an organisation still active.¹⁴⁸

During their travels for information gathering the experts were inspired by the peace activist women they met. According to the experts these women were despite the surrounding chaos, limited resources, threats to their safety, and marginalisation by decision makers working firmly.

” Contemporary women's peace missions are rarely greeted with the deference that heads of state accorded the delegates from the International Congress of Women. But this indifference has not stopped women from organizing for peace. They are still active, and their work is still just as vital. Throughout our journey – in the Mano River countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia; in the Middle East and Latin America; in East Timor, Cambodia, the Balkans and the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Rwanda, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo) – we met brave and tireless women who had much in common with the women of the ICW. They shared the ability to see beyond national boundaries, even while their governments maintained isolationist or pro-war positions. They shared a vision for peace based on respect for the dignity of the individual, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or economic background. And they shared the

¹⁴⁷ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 75.

¹⁴⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 75.

understanding that peace is linked inextricably with equality between women and men, a concept introduced by the ICW”, the experts explain.¹⁴⁹

However, the experts repeat the question asked by Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Namibia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, who acted as President of the Security Council during October 2000 when Resolution 1325 was unanimously passed: “Women are half of every community ... Are they, therefore, not also half of every solution?” The experts argue that despite women’s peacebuilding efforts, women are seldom present at the peace negotiation tables, too often excluded from the transitional governments and political parties forming democracy rarely advocates women.¹⁵⁰

The experts note that there are several lost opportunities in peacekeeping missions as well. Despite many direct benefits and opportunities women experienced from the presence of UN troops, gender issues could be enforced on the peacekeeping agenda. To empower host community women they should be consulted about the peace operation and allow local women to play a more active role in re-building their nation.¹⁵¹ The presentation of female police, military and civilian personnel should be sharply increased, as the shortage is a clear limitation to help to create an environment where women feel safe to report cases.¹⁵² The experts experienced such lack for example in The Democratic Republic of Congo: “In my culture, it is not common to talk about sex with men, let alone strange men," a woman in the DRC confided to us.

"Many of the women who were raped like I was can identify their attackers, but find it difficult to report them to the police. We can talk to you because you are women like us. But we can't talk about these things with men. If only we had female police in MONUC¹⁵³ to whom we can report these horrible things that happened to us.”¹⁵⁴

Men have a tendency to possess the formal positions in peacebuilding processes. The politicians are mostly male as well as formal leaders, peace negotiators and peacekeepers. Usually there is an unequally distribution of power between women and men. Hence, the majority of women do not have

¹⁴⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 75-76.

¹⁵⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 76.

¹⁵¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 61-63.

¹⁵² Rehn and Johnson Sirlefa, 64-65, 69-70.

¹⁵³ United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

¹⁵⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 69.

a voice in local and national decision making processes. The expert's reminds about the importance of not excluding women from the process:

“ When women are there, the nature of the dialogue changes. Women's concerns come not merely out of their own experiences, but of their rootedness in their communities. They represent different constituencies: those in need of education, of health care, of jobs and of land. They have a different experience of war from male fighters and politicians.”¹⁵⁵

Notwithstanding as explained above, women can have an important, but largely unrecognized and under performed role, in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. The underlying assumption is that women associated in these processes can contribute to design “positive peace” that can be beneficial to the protection and empowerment of women. Feminist links the realisation security with the respect of human rights of all people.

Originating from this approach is the generally accepted idea of including and empowering women in the decision-making as well as in all areas of peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. Additionally, this holistic approach includes activities to sensitize male peacekeeping personnel. Gender mainstreaming can be enhanced by providing gender focused trainings and curriculum, by establishing codes of conduct, as well as disciplinary measures for military and peacekeeping personnel conducting sexual violence and exploitation gender.¹⁵⁶

Several formal peacebuilding missions and activities lack of understanding or acknowledgment of the diverse communities as well as diversity within the communities where they are active and operate. The report raises an example:

“I was against the creation of a Gender Affairs Unit for the UN's Transitional Authority in East Timor. I did not think a Gender Unit would help rebuild institutions from the ashes of what the militia left. I was wrong. The first regulation I passed guaranteed human rights standards, including CEDAW¹⁵⁷ as a foundation of all new government institutions we created. The Unit

¹⁵⁵ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 62-63.

¹⁵⁷ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

brought this to life reaching out to East Timorese women, and, together with UNIFEM, provided support that resulted in a higher percentage of women in the Constituent Assembly than in many other countries. The Unit worked with East Timorese women to create what is now the East Timorese Government Office for the Advancement of Women.”

Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, East Timor¹⁵⁸

Women as practitioners waging for peace can have manifold features and different dimension. Civil society groups created and run by women can provide a visible alternative to hatred and violence. Women create demonstrations and campaigns on local community level as well as across borders.

“For Ruth, building peace in her village outside of Freetown, Sierra Leone, meant taking in the children of neighbours, friends or family members who were killed in the war. For Tatiana in Kosovo peace work meant rebuilding damaged houses as well as friendships with former neighbours who had turned against her during the conflict. In Bosnia women have established mobile health clinics to provide gynaecological and psychosocial care to women survivors of rape and assault, most of whom had never seen a doctor or a counselor. In Colombia, we joined some 20,000 women organized by the new National Movement of Women Against the War in a march to demand an end to a conflict that kills about 3,500 each year. Their protest, "We won't give birth to more sons to send to war," rang through the streets of Medellín. Mercedes Vargas, a teacher and union leader, travelled eight hours by bus from the provincial capital of Manizales to join the demonstration. "The women have something in common," she told us. “We want peace. We are here demanding a negotiated end to this conflict”¹⁵⁹ the experts write about their experiences.

The assessment also raises an issue about women as a resource for early warning of escalating conflicts. The experts’ met women who told stories about how they saw and experienced how the

¹⁵⁸ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 61.

¹⁵⁹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 76-77.

hostilities were escalating in their surroundings, but as they are disconnected from the “seats of power” this important resource to possibly prevent or diminish deadly conflicts is largely unused.¹⁶⁰

As we learn of Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic gender based violence often remains a persistent problem in the period following the termination of a conflict. It might even increase within the domestic scope. Growing domestic violence and crime in the private sphere is a continuing and direct result of social upheaval and conflicts.

“Criminal activity often thrives in such situations, where law enforcement is generally weak and there is rarely an effective judicial system. Women are exposed to physical and sexual violence in camps, on the street or in their homes. Perpetrators may be returning combatants, neighbours or family members. Women have nowhere to turn: law enforcement agents, military officials, peacekeeping forces or civilian police may be complicit or themselves guilty of these acts. The failure to prevent and punish such crimes is a betrayal of women on a massive scale” the experts describe the stark reality of women being denied justice.¹⁶¹

When seeking justice in response to gender-specific violence, women are often marginalized or rendered within judicial processes, including war tribunals. The experts state:

“Accountability on the part of states and societies for crimes against women means more than punishing perpetrators. It means establishing the rule of law and a just social and political order. Without this, there can be no lasting peace. Impunity weakens the foundation of societies emerging from conflict by legitimizing violence and inequality.”¹⁶²

Gender injustice perpetuates inequality in the aftermath of armed conflicts. The injustice can prevent societies from developing their full potential. J Ann. Tickner argued that a truly comprehensive security can not be achieved until gender relations and subordination are eliminated¹⁶³. Therefore, to prevent re-victimization the justice structures and functioning rule of law are crucial elements for empowering women in the recovering society.¹⁶⁴ Acting towards these objectives unfolds Johan

¹⁶⁰ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 111-112.

¹⁶¹ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 88.

¹⁶² Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 89-90.

¹⁶³ Tickner, 23.

¹⁶⁴ Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 89-90, 102.

Galtung's vision of "positive" peace building and reconciliation broader. However, the acts of these vital issues are often left out for the sake of establishing "negative peace" by solely ending the violence. This leaves significant causes of violence and conflicts unsolved. These causes can be such as economic inequalities as well as substantial social separations and the social praising of violent masculinities.

Many of the issues feminist care about and raises are related to family, as patriarchal family structures have been used as a tool to keep women in a subordinate position both in their homes and generally in the societies. Cynthia Enloe defines patriarchy as the ideological and structural system which privileges masculinity¹⁶⁵. There are numerous different social, legal and cultural reasons that holds women at home and these reasons inhibits women from making meaningful alternatives about their own lives and reduces the possibilities of empowerment. For instance, when women are solely responsible for the unpaid labour of taking care of the home and family, it forces women to remain economically dependent on their husband or other male breadwinner. This can lead to restricted opportunities for civic participation outside the home and also increases the risk for experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse.

Nadine Puechguirbal argue that prevailing gendered power hierarchies in societies deprive women of their agency. This leads to that women are associated with the private realm and primary as caretakers of children affected by wars. This makes it difficult to promote women's active participation in peace negotiations and conflict resolution as it seems that only little room for a different and more dynamic role for women exists. According to Puechguirbal it is crucial to understand the "Beautiful soul" and "Just warrior" dilemma. "The stereotyping of women appears to be used to keep them away from the peace negotiation table on the grounds that they did not participate in the fighting", and Puechguirbal continues by stating "the justification often given in that the peace table must bring together those who have taken up arms, because it is up to them to stop the conflict".¹⁶⁶ Moreover, Puechguirbal also raises an important argument which according to her is a striking generalization. In the United Nations context, it is assumed that all women in all conflict areas are favouring peace irrespective of their background.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Enloe, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Puechguirbal, 176-177.

¹⁶⁷ Puechguirbal, 181.

5. Conclusions and reflections

5.1. Conclusions

While we have encountered an increased focus in the past few decades on the role of women in armed conflict and peace building context, globally women are still predominantly perceived and categorized as victims of wars and conflicts. As the international community continues to seek solutions to global security crises and strives to build sustainable peace, it is the goal of feminist research to raise issues from a gender point of view. These include for example women's experience of violence and the many ways women are working to prevent wars and conflict as well as to secure sustainable peace. The purpose of this study was to provide, in addition to the dominating discourse of the role of women as victims and targets and that war and peacebuilding only affects men, alternative views of looking at civilian women's experiences in the face of war and peace using also the notions of practitioners and empowerment.

While gathering information about feminist research for this study I noticed that arguments against feminist research were mostly about the apparent lack of a convincing scientific methodology and grand theory. However, I found it appealing that feminist research is open to different methods of data collection and hence make the gender lens approach insightful. As the analysed research material for my study is based on personal real-life experiences of women, I argue that this kind of methodology for research provides the audience a deep reflection and understanding on the ways in which conflicts impact on women and how women can be agents and a vital part in the peace building processes. This finding is broadly in line with the general goal of feminist research. By listening to the voices of women the international community and local leaders are able to formulate legal and practical responses that can reduce women's suffering and enhance empowerment. This understanding can also guide interventions to address women specific concerns.

By looking at different global issues through gender lenses we can dispel misconceptions about the world, such as the myth of the "Beautiful soul", "Just warrior" and the immunity of civilians in the conflict scene. Nonetheless, an undeniable fact is that biological differences exists between women and men. These biological differences are generally applied to characterise women as helpless and in need of protection, especially in the context of armed conflicts. However, in stead of biological factors vulnerability is more of a consequence of patriarchal, cultural, social and political causes. All in all, women do not have the same resources, authority and political rights to meet their personal needs or

control their environments as men. Additionally, women's traditional household obligations might limit their mobility.

The goal of Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was to document and raise awareness on how women experience conflicts and how women are able to contribute to peace building processes. After the publishing of their assessment the UN Security Council have adopted seven more resolutions in relation to the "Women, Peace and Security" framework. It is difficult to assess which kind of weight the special expert' assessment has played in the process, but surely the assessment has not gone unnoticed. The additional Security Council resolutions affirms that there can be no impunity for those who command or commit sexual violence as well as pledging the international community to prevent and respond to such violence perpetrated during and after conflict.

Women also experience war differently from men. Nonetheless, conflicts affect everyone on its path. As demonstrated in the findings, women's experiences in the context of war and peace are complex and can be defined as a mix of experiences. Women see first hand the devastating impact that war and conflict, increased militarization and violence has on their communities, their families, and their own bodies. The general discourse gives little space to how women carry on as practitioners in spite of violence that may surround and affect them, how women raise and care for their families in desperate situations and how women through the experienced hardships they develop visions of peace. It is the combination of these aspects that shapes how women experience conflict. However, I want to emphasise that the negative consequences of war and conflict for the quality of women's lives should not be underestimated.

One of the findings I would especially like to raise is how women can be practitioners in the "early warning" phase of escalating conflicts. Women sense and experience the possible growing hostilities in their community. Unfortunately, this ability is often a lost opportunity as women do not have the power nor authority to report the increasing instabilities.

Sexual violence is a frequently used tactic in wars and conflicts. One of the purposes of the sexual violence is to destroy families and communities. In addition to the physical and psychological consequences of sexual violence, women are often victimized by stigmatization and can be affected by HIV/AIDS. For millions of women affected by conflicts worldwide the brutality and atrocities has resulted in the need to leave their homes and livelihoods. While fleeing as well in refugee and IDP camps, women often face a lack of physical security, experience sexual abuse and has no access to

adequate healthcare. One additional disturbing element of sexual violence against women in conflict is conducted by those who should be there to help and assist: the peacekeeping personnel and aid workers.

Even though women have been practitioners in leading peace movements and been active leaders in community recovery in the aftermath of conflicts, women are almost completely missing from official peace negotiations and peace agreements. Exclusion from reconstruction processes restricts and limits empowerment of women. To be able to recover from conflicts women should be provided the possibility to gain justice for human rights violations and to participate in shaping egalitarian societies.

In the end of my concluding part I would like to return to the introduction and first page of my study. Although Johan Galtung did not specially mention gender impact in his notion of “positive peace” I argue that his vision included the elements Kofi Annan reminds us about.

“Efforts to resolve these conflicts¹⁶⁸ and address their root causes will not succeed unless we empower all those who have suffered from them -- including and especially women. And only if women play a full and equal part can we build the foundations for enduring peace -- development, good governance, human rights and justice.”¹⁶⁹

5.2. Reflections

The work of Ehlstain, Enloe, Cohn and many other prominent feminists demonstrate us the importance of exercising our own curiosity towards global politics. The gender lenses approach can be used for example as we watch television and documentaries, read newspapers or listen to accounts by journalists, politicians and analysts presenting issues around violent conflicts. Why is the issue being reported in this specific way? Who benefits from the story reported like this? Is something obscured deliberately? Cynthia Enloe described feminist curiosity as a distinctive curiosity that

¹⁶⁸ With “these conflicts” Kofi Annan refers to the previous paragraph of his foreword: “Most of today’s conflicts take place within states. Their root causes often include poverty, the struggle for scarce resources, and violations of human rights. They have another tragic feature in common: women and girls suffer their impact disproportionately. While women and girls endure the same trauma as the rest of the population -- bombings, famines, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation -- they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuse, including sexual violence and exploitation.”

¹⁶⁹ Women, Peace and Security : Study Submitted by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325. (New York: United Nations, 2002), ix.

begins with taking women seriously. As we know this means according to her listening carefully, digging deep, challenging assumptions, and welcoming surprises.

Personally this research was an engrossing journey. Previously I had in general no curiosity about women's life. I had little interest of femininities and masculinities, I had even less interest in how gender influences world politics. I just did not give these issues special thoughts. This study introduced me to prominent feminist thinkers in various academic disciplines. Still I can not identify myself as a feminist, but I have to admit that a serious feminist curiosity has awoken and my respect towards feminism have made a turnaround. Most importantly, this study introduced me to the experiences of the women portrayed as practitioners, victims and targets who too often are forgotten in the margins and perceived as a spill over of war and conflict. It has added multiple dimensions to my understanding of peace, peace resolution, peacekeeping missions as well as war and conflicts.

I wanted to exit my comfort zone and apply a totally new research area for me. In this regard I think I succeeded. However, I also realize that I have only scratched the surface of feminist research and how it relates to the context of women, peace and armed conflict. During my research process I noted that there were so many aspects of the topic I would like to explore and gain more knowledge about. All different conflicts affected countries could naturally be investigated deeper and analysed separately by gender lenses to be able to find the specific features and impact on women these conflicts have on their lives. Especially it would be interesting to analyse the grass root level impact women in these countries have had on the peace building efforts. Two more specific topics which caught my curiosity are about the sexual violence in conflicts of males who are feminized and how are the males acted upon who does not full fill the characteristics of the "Just Warrior".

The study also gave refreshing perspective to my own life. I'm empowered and privileged by being born in a democratic welfare nation and possess a passport which allows me to move rather freely. I am highly educated to a profession I have personally chosen. I have chosen my spouse out of true love, we are equal in our relationship and I have been able to plan the size of my family. I have my own earnings and own my property. I can choose where I live. I have access to well established health care and if I or my family members become sick we are able to receive proper treatment and medicine. I have not experienced direct violence against myself nor harassment. I am able to raise my offspring in a peaceful society, as well as feed him, educate and care for him properly. If I become a victim to a crime, I know where to cast my case and have the possibility of receiving justice. I have been able to influence and make my own choices regarding my life. The journey this study took me through made me value my free life even more than before. Professionally the notion of gender mainstreaming

reached a new level and that is something I want and will share with my colleagues in an adequate way.

The study also left me pondering several issues. Of all these ponderings I would however raise one question. If the early feminist asked where are the women in world politics, my question is where are the men carrying out research in connection and relation to gender issues?

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