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GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO SMALL ARMS CONTROL

A feminist analysis contextualising Kosovo's small arms control efforts with regard to gender provisions

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ABSTRACT

Rani Deleersnijder: Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Small Arms Control: A Feminist Analysis Contextualising Kosovo's Small Arms Control Efforts with regard to Gender Provisions.

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The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a significant threat to human security around the world. Past research has demonstrated the gendered dimensions of small arms ownership, misuse and victimhood. This thesis further examines the intersectional experience of small arms violence based on gender, connecting such violence to contextual factors that underpin and reinforce it. In addition, this study explores gender-responsive approaches to small arms control by examining how they are included and portrayed in the ongoing policy framework of Kosovo. The context of Kosovo is used as a case study due to its struggle with small arms proliferation, and importantly, its active framework of action against it. The research objective of this study does not aim to provide policy recommendations, but rather increase attention to the intersectional experiences and impacts of small arms abuse, open a conversation about the complex intersectional factors between gender and small arms and consequently argue for gender-sensitivity in small arms programmes.

To answer the main research objective, the study is divided into three sub-research questions. First, data from the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform is used to investigate the extent of gendered dimensions to small arms violence in Kosovo. Next, a critical feminist perspective is used to explore different contextual factors which intersect with gender, gender-based violence and small arms violence. Lastly, the findings of the first research questions are applied to the small arms control framework of Kosovo to understand how gendered dimensions of small arms are understood and incorporated in their approach. Central to the full study are the theoretical underpinnings, which are grounded in feminist peace theory and critical and feminist security studies.

The findings of this study indicate that small arms violence in Kosovo has highly gendered dimensions that are structurally embedded in Kosovo society. Issues of small arms proliferation and misuse intersect with several contextual factors, making them highly complex. The current small arms control framework in Kosovo takes these gendered dimensions into account but treats small arms violence mainly as a standalone issue. Through a feminist epistemological perspective, this thesis argues for a focus on small arms violence in its relation to the structural factors that reproduce it to enhance a holistic and intersectional approach to small arms control.

Keywords: Small Arms and Light Weapons, Gender-Responsive Small Arms Control, Gender-Based Violence, Domestic Violence, Kosovo, Feminist Peace Research, Critical Security Studies

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List of Abbreviations

SEESAC - South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
SALW - Small Arms and Light Weapons
ATT - Arms Trade Treaty
NATO - North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OAF - Operation Allied Force
EU - European Union
KLA - Kosovo Liberation Army
UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UN - United Nations
GBV - Gender-Based Violence
DV - Domestic Violence
WMEAT - The World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers
IPV - Intimate Partner Violence
ITI - International Tracing Instrument
CEE - Central- and Eastern Europe
SEE - South Eastern Europe
UNPoA - UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
SFRY - The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
ICTY - International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
NGO - non-governmental organisation
FPR - Feminist Peace Research
CSS - Critical Security Studies
FSS - Feminist Security Studies
LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual
RAE - Roma, Askali and Egyptian minorities
ARCS - The ARES Arms & Munitions Classification System
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
WILPF - Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
IANSA - International Action Network on Small Arms
KWN - Kosovo Women's Network
NEWW - Network of East– West Women
TA - Thematic Analysis
AVMP - Armed Violence Monitor Platform
OSCE - Organisation for security and cooperation in Europe
OC - organised crime
PROGRAEK organisation - Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo

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1. Introduction

According to the last estimates by Small Arms Survey, around 857 million small arms were in civilian possession in 2017 (Karp, 2018a). At least 133 million firearms are held by military forces and a further 22.7 million are estimated to be in rotation in law enforcement institutions (Karp, 2018b; 2018c). The number of military-owned small arms has likely increased over the past few years since reported global military spending grew approximately 500 US$B since the estimations by Small Arms Survey, from 1934,92 US$B in 2017, to a record-breaking 2718,18 US$B (in current prices) in 2024 according to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (SIPRI, n.d.). Of relevance for this study is that the overwhelming majority of firearms are held by civilians, demonstrating the vast issue of small arms proliferation among civilians on the global level (Karp, 2018a). In its reports of the estimations, Small Arms Survey hints at multiple factors, such as legislation, gun culture and historical roots, required to explain the vast proliferation of small arms (Karp, 2018a). The ambition of this thesis is to add to - and encourage - conversations on the topic of small arms issues and its multi-layered, intersectional dimensions. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) misuse, proliferation and trafficking are global issues and conversation across academic disciplines, practitioners and policy-makers about the complexity of the issues around small arms is urgent (Greene & Marsh, 2012; Farr et al., 2009). By adopting a Feminist Peace perspective this thesis intends to contribute to this larger conversation by highlighting an aspect which has largely been in the margins of both research and policy-making: the relation between gender and small arms.

Surprisingly, weaponry, especially small arms is seldom the unit of analysis in peace and conflict studies (Farr et al., 2009). Research within peace and conflict studies often focuses on the multilayered and complex roots of conflicts and attempts to explore tools for conflict transformation. Small arms remain an essential product used in conflicts around the world and impact both conflict and non-conflict labelled contexts (Acheson, 2020; Farr, 2002; LeBrun, 2019). However, research on the complex roots of conflict onset and transformation to relative peace have under-explored the role of arms, before, during and after conflict (Greene & Marsh, 2012). On the other hand, research focusing on small arms has tended to detach small arms from their embedded context and complex interactions with other factors (Greene & Marsh, 2012).

This study aims to bring these two perspectives together by analysing the complex struggles with small arms in the post-conflict setting of Kosovo through a feminist peace lens. First, the theoretical foundation to map the relationship of small arms to complex intersectional societal factors are

feminist peace research (FPR), and critical-, and feminist security studies (Väyrynen et al. 2021; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). Key concepts such as continuums of violence, intersectionality and patriarchal power relations will underpin the lens of analysis (eg. Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Tickner, 1992; Cockburn, 2012).

Second, the academic canon of SALW literature created since the beginning of this millennium has uncovered the importance of gender-sensitive arms control programming (eg. Farr, 2002; Farr et al. 2009; LeBrun, 2019). It has mapped the gendered impact of the full lifecycle of a small arm, from legislation on its control to its ownership, use and destruction (LeBrun, 2019; Frey, 2017; Farr et al. 2009). The existing literature on the gendered dimensions of small arms, together with findings from the first research question, argues for gender-responsive arms control to account for the differentiated impact of, and experiences with, SALW based on gender. Research questions two and three depart from this argument that gender-responsive arms control is relevant and urgent.

1.1. Introduction case study

The analysis of the thesis will focus on Kosovo[1] as a case study. The scope has been limited from the region of the Western Balkans due to practical reasons but also because a more narrow focus allowed more time to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relations between gender, small arms and the context-specific structures and characteristics which influence this relation. While the issue of SALW control is pertinent across the whole region, the complexity of its intersections with gender and other human characteristics is shaped by historically grown contextual and cultural elements. To avoid generalisation or homogenisation of the region, one case study, Kosovo, will be at the centre of the analysis. Research on the gender dimensions of SALW in Kosovo is made possible by the accessibility of data through the efforts of SALW Control such as the regional framework, national action plans for SALW control, reports monitoring the progress of commitments made in the framework and the armed violence monitor platform (AVMP)[2] which reports incidents of SALW misuse disaggregated by different types of incidents, among which domestic violence (DV) (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Progress reports see eg. SEESAC, 2024e).

[1] In regards to the status of Kosovo, this thesis will follow the UN Security Council resolution 1244 and the international Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence. The designation of Kosovo is without prejudice on status.

[2] https://www.seesac.org/AVMP/

Kosovo ranks in the top 25 of arms possession per 100 civilians, ranking 17th with an estimate of 23.8 firearms per 100 people (Small Arms Survey, 2017). The overwhelming amount of these arms are estimated to be unregistered and therefore remain under the radar of government control.
Research by Božanić (2016, 2022) has demonstrated the interlinkages between small arms and gender-based violence in the Kosovar context, and the region more broadly. Next to this, Kosovo is thus far the only country in the region with an active action plan for SALW control until 2028, an important source of data to answer the main research question (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024). This thesis will complement the existing research by mapping the different structures and factors which influence and constitute the relations between gender and small arms, more specifically in domestic violence and gender-based violence involving firearms.

Kosovo is often discussed in relation to its regional neighbours, however, references to the regional demarcation of Central-Eastern Europe (CEE), South-Eastern Europe (SEE) and the Western Balkans often cover different areas depending on the author's definition[3]. This thesis will use the term Western Balkans as used in the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024). The countries included in the Roadmaps are: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania. Of importance for the historical background section is that this area does not fully overlap with the borders of the former Yugoslavia since Albania was not a part of the republic and Croatia and Slovenia are not included in the Roadmaps (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). However, since Kosovo forms the case study of the research the historical background sticks to its history within former Yugoslavia and the years since its breakdown.

The main organisation researching small arms and gender-responsive SALW control in the Western Balkans is the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). SEESAC is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Stability Pact for South East Europe, succeeded by the current Regional Cooperation Council (SEESAC, n.d.b). The organisation was launched in 2002 to combat the issue of SALW proliferation in post-conflict peacebuilding (South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan, 2014). SEESAC functions as the practical organ of the *Regional Implementation Plan on Combating Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)* (SEESAC, n.d.b). The last

[3] The region of the Western Balkans is for example, not covered in the book *The Gender Politics of Domestic Violence in Central Eastern Europe*, while it is part of the research for *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia* which defines CEE as a broader geographical area (Kriszán & Roggeband, 2018; Fábián, 2022).

revised Regional Implementation Plan dates from 2014 and builds on the Stability Pact's Regional Implementation Plan put into force in 2001 (South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan, 2014). SEESAC operates from UNDP's office in Belgrade and is guided by the *Regional Steering Group for Small Arms and Light Weapons (RSG*). This steering group demonstrates the combination of national and international ownership of the organisation as it consists of the participating states but also UNDO and international observers such as the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (SEESAC, n.d.b).

SEESAC functions as the support point for SALW control programmes in South East Europe (South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan, 2014). In 2009 gender equality in the security sector was added as a focal point (SEESAC, n.d.b). SEESAC provides support in the development and execution of the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024). Next to this, the organisation monitors and reports the progress of actions taken by each participating state, it is a central of assistance and review in the area of small arms control (SEESAC, n.d.b; South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan, 2014).

1.2.Overview Research Questions

By using a feminist approach this thesis aims to answer: How does gender intersect with small arms issues, recognising the role of societal factors to re-contextualise the small arms control framework in Kosovo?

To answer this main research question the following sub-research questions will be analysed:

- RQ1. How can an analysis of the gendered dimensions of small arms-involved domestic violence in Kosovo inform research on small arms control?
- RQ2. How do societal factors contextualise gendered dimensions of small arms violence?
- RQ3. Based on the SALW Control Roadmaps and the corresponding Kosovo Action Plans, how are the gendered dimensions of small arms violence incorporated in efforts of small arms control in Kosovo?

To answer the main research questions the analysis will be divided into three sub-questions. The first two sub-questions form the stepping stones to analyse how provisions of gender-responsive arms control are included in small arms control efforts in Kosovo. The first sub-question examines how incidents of a specific form of SALW violence, domestic violence involving a firearm, have

evolved between 2014-2024 and whether specific gendered dimensions of such violence can be observed.

After establishing the presence of gender dimensions of small arms, the study diverts its focus to the complex contextual factors which underpin the relation between gender and SALW. Through a feminist approach, different factors are identified and mapped out through a systematic review of existing literature. This research question aims to bring together intersectional factors which influence, reinforce and legitimate gendered SALW abuse in Kosovo. Elements such as patriarchal norms, trust in security institutions, grey economy, organised crime, (un)employment, ethnicity, nationalism and international interventionism all have been researched in relation to gender, gender-based violence and/or small arms proliferation (eg. Hasani, 2024; Coenders, 2020; Herbert, 2022; Hoxha & Andresen, 2021; Dobranja, 2022; Sigona, 2012; Balbon, 2024). This section does not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis, rather it aims to demonstrate and kickstart a conversation about, the complexity and intersectional factors which are intertwined in the relation between gender and small arms.

The findings of these two sub-questions are finally applied to examine how the complex relation between gender, small arms and broader societal factors are incorporated in the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) and accompanying National Action Plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). The Roadmaps (2018; 2024) outline the policy targets concerning small arms control. These targets are operationalised into concrete planned actions in the national action plans. First, the two Roadmaps and corresponding action plans are inductively analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, to outline how gender provisions are included and framed within the data. Next, progress reports will be discussed, they provide an overview of the actual actions taken throughout the period 2018-2024 and show whether and how the outlined policy aims were translated into practice. Lastly, the factors discussed under sub-question two will be deductively applied to the documents to interrogate and uncover possible silences in the targets related to gender-responsive arms control.

The aim of this study is not to provide critique or recommendations for the specific SALW control programmes of Kosovo. It aims to show how this case has tried to include gender provisions in small arms policies and how a feminist peace perspective enhances such attempts. The overarching objective of this thesis is to increase attention to the intersectional experiences and impact of SALW abuse and demonstrate the usefulness of gender-sensitive small arms programmes.

1.3.Ethics and limitations

The thesis is embedded in the socio-cultural position of the researcher, written within an academic institution in Tampere, Finland and produced in the current socio-political context. The latter impacts the research because this thesis consciously aims to challenge the current socio-political observation of hardened security relations and increased military expenditures (as reported by SIPRI, n.d.). The former implies that, while choices are based on existing research and conscious reflections through feminist methodologies, the positionality of the researcher as an outsider to the case context, implies important limitations to the knowledge which can be created in this study (Alejandro, 2021). Contextual and cultural factors at play within Kosovo were not analysed through felt experience or familiarity with the context but through research and reports conducted on the context. Reflexivity of the researcher's position, both geographical; outside of Kosovo, and geo-political; from an academic institution located within the Western sphere, limits the possible epistemological knowledge claims of the study (Alejandro, 2021; O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023). The practice of reflexivity, defined by Alejandro (2021, p. 152) as "the practice of making conscious and explicit our practices, beliefs and dispositions", is central to all the steps taken throughout the writing of this thesis. Firstly, a conscious reflection of the researcher's outside position was taken into account in the case selection. The Western Balkans have been portrayed in past Eurocentric research in a stereotypically violent manner (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023; Getoš Kalac, 2021). Continuous reflections on the repercussions of such portrayals run throughout the thesis. The research does not endorse essentialist claims and aims to provide a multi-layered analysis, demonstrating the complexity of small arms violence in Kosovo.

Next to this, reflexivity is key to the critical theoretical foundations of the thesis, FPR and critical security studies (CSS). Central to these foundations are reflections on the power embedded in knowledge-creation to oppress or emancipate (Väyrynen et al., 2021; Alejandro, 202&). These theories underpin the aim of the thesis to challenge traditional research and policy-making of SALW control.

Lastly, feminist methodologies, accompanied by methods such as reflexive thematic analysis, are used to weave these reflections throughout the way the analysis was conducted (Ackerly & True, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The scope of the study does not allow to take multiple characteristics, such as age, class, gender, and ethnicity, into account. The focus will be on the gendered dimensions of small arms, other important intersectional characteristics will not feature largely in the research. In addition to gender,

characteristics of age, class and urban vs rural aspects have been shown to play a significant role in the experience and impact of SALW on a person's life (Farr et al., 2009). While the scope of the research is too limited to cover these characteristics in depth, the importance of intersectionality in the experience of people with small arms violence will return throughout.

1.4.Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters, including the introduction outlined above (chapter 1). The second chapter describes the contextual background of Kosovo within and post the breakdown of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This chapter also outlines the ongoing issues of SALW proliferation and misuse in Kosovo. After this, the conceptual framework of the thesis is sketched (chapter 3). The chapter discusses the key concepts from feminist peace research and critical- and feminist security studies, which are central to the analysis of the research questions. The discussion of literature continues in chapter four which discusses the state of the art on small arms and more specifically delves into literature emphasising the gendered dimensions of SALW and the importance of gender-responsive small arms control. Next to this, this section discusses the gendered nature of SALW in the context of Kosovo and the Western Balkans. The methodological chapter (chapter 5) outlines the use of an overarching feminist methodology to analyse the research questions and explains the methods used for the three sections of the analysis, before closing the chapter with limitations to these methods.

Chapter six is the first analytical chapter, it gives an overview of the AVMP and explores the evolutions and gendered dimensions of domestic violence incidents in Kosovo over the past ten years. This section aims to answer the first sub-research question.

This chapter is followed by the analysis of sub-research question two (chapter 7). This section brings together literature on intersecting contextual factors which shape, influence and reinforce the presence and persistence of gendered small arms abuse. By mapping how factors, such as employment, patriarchal norms and organised crime, intersect with small arms violence, gender and specifically gender-based violence, this section shows the complexity of the gendered dimensions of small arms and gendered small arms violence, such as SALW-involved gender-based violence (GBV). This research question aims to analyse whether and how a feminist intersectional analysis can enrich small arms control efforts.

Lastly, chapter eight forms the analysis of the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) and the National Action Plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). It first delves into the gendered

dimensions included in the data, examining how gender provisions are included in the SALW control programme. After this, it analyses the actual steps taken in the period 2018-2024, before applying the findings of the second research questions to the data. This last step highlights what is not discussed within the current framework of SALW and explores how the feminist discussion of intersectional factors under research question two can critically enhance SALW programming. Conclusions (chapter 9) are drawn in the last chapter, which argues that the current regional SALW control framework of the Western Balkans includes important provisions for gender and is progressive in its inclusion of intersectionality. However, the analysis also shows limits to the framework, especially in grasping the underlying societal factors, patriarchal norms and long-term nature underpinning the gendered dimensions of small arms. The evolution of domestic violence incidents involving a small arm adds to this conclusion as the gendered ownership, use and victimhood of small arms remain relevant throughout the full period of coverage.

2. Contextual Background

2.1. Kosovo in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Kosovo war and contested sovereignty

2.1.1. Kosovo in the Second Yugoslav Republic (1945-1991)

The historical events outlined below are deeply intertwined with the broader regional dynamics and conflicts between the Western Balkan states. It isn't feasible, nor the objective, to map the intricacies and complexity of the disintegration of the SFRY. Furthermore, it is not the purpose of this section to investigate the historical legitimacy of either Kosovar or Serbian state myths and narratives (for more historical background see: Benson, 2001; Gulyás; 2012; Magocsi, 2018). Rather, an overview of the region's contemporary history is sketched to inform and contextualise the research. It is relevant to outline broadly the waves of autonomy and restrictions placed upon Kosovo under the Second Yugoslav state and the events that led up to its disintegration, to understand the issues of arms control Kosovo continues to face.

The second Yugoslav state was created in 1945, after the Second World War (WWII) (Benson, 2001; Magocsi, 2018; Gulyás, 2012). The federation consisted of six people's republics, five named after and comprised most ethnolinguistic groups: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia (Magosci, 2018). Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sixth republic, was based on a historical region which encompassed Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. In addition to these republics, two autonomous regions were created within the Serbian republic: Kosovo-Metohija, a region with an Albanian majority and the multi-ethnic region of the Vojvodina (Magosci, 2018).

Gulyás (2012) identifies three time periods which differently impacted the region of Kosovo. From 1945 to his death in 1980, Tito was the highest authority of the federation. His rule can be split into two periods with differentiating levels of autonomy for Kosovo. A change in the first period from 1945-1965 compared to the pre-WWII period was the right to education in the Albanian language, this created the possibility to counter the 90% illiteracy rate among Albanians in the region (Gulyás, 2012). In 1963 Kosovo-Metohija received more rights when its status was updated from autonomous region to autonomous province. During this period, Serbia still strictly controlled all political and administrative institutions and the Albanian population was highly securitised (Gulyás,

2012). The second Tito period consisted of a range of reforms which broadened the province's autonomy, its name was changed to Kosovo and Albanian became recognised as an official language of the federation (Gulyás, 2012). The 1974 constitution raised Kosovo's status to a constituent member of the federation with independent governmental organs (Benson, 2001; Gulyás, 2012; Corrin, 2000). Contrary to the other republics, Kosovo did not enjoy the right to secede from the SFRY (Gulyás, 2012).

The post-Tito period radically decreased the regions' autonomy and crystallised the contradictory state discourses between Serbia and Kosovo (Gulyás, 2012). Between 1961 and 1991 the population of Albanians in the region increased from 67% to 84%, while the Serbian population decreased from 27.5% to 10% (Gulyás, 2012). The increased importance of the Albanian ethnicity in the Yugoslav Federation in general was not perceived well by Serbia (Benson, 2001). Protests in Kosovo in 1981 by Albanian nationalists, demanding the raise of Kosovo's status formally to the Seventh Peoples Republic further increased the tensions between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo (Magosci, 2018; Bracewell, 2000). Serbia removed some of the privileges Kosovo had gained under the second Tito period and, eventually stripped both Kosovo and the Vojvodina of their autonomous status (Benson, 2001; Magosci, 2018; Gulyás, 2012). This created an imbalance of power in the federal state structures which was a triggering factor in the declarations of independence by Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo in 1991 (Magosci, 2018; Gulyás, 2012). Kosovo's independence was not internationally recognised and Serbia increased its military presence in reaction.

From 1991 until 1998 parallel political institutions were created in Kosovo by the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the one hand and the Albanian population on the other (Gulyás, 2012). During this period the radical group Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the leading military organisation during the Kosovo war, gained strength and influence (Gulyás, 2012). The KLA was linked to the Jashari clan in its criminal activities, which involved trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings (Pugh, 2014). Next to its criminal and military characteristics, the KLA grew a strong economic and political position in Kosovo and was deeply entangled in the political shadow institutions built before and during the Kosovo war (Raufer, 2018; Pugh, 2014). Economically the KLA was an important source of goods for civilians and largely controlled the labour and black markets in Kosovo (Pugh, 2014). The entanglements of the organisation in military, political, economic and criminal structures posed significant difficulties to the international monitoring

system in the post-conflict reconstruction of Kosovo (Raufer, 2018). By 1998 the KLA was executing armed attacks against Serbian forces which resulted in a "so-called preventative military strike" by Serbia which resulted in the Kosovo War from 1998 until 1999 (Gulyás, 2012; p.145; Benson, 2001).

2.1.2.The Kosovo War (1998-1999)

The Kosovo war was a multi-dimensional conflict. It consisted of an internal struggle between the Yugoslav forces, the KLA and the Kosovar population, and an international conflict due to the intervention by NATO's Operation Allied Force (OAF) against the Yugoslav army (Webber, 2009).

Airstrikes by NATO eventually led Milošević, president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997 to 2000, to recapitulate (Webber, 2009). An agreement was reached in 1999 which outlined Kosovo's right to self-determination within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until a final decision on its status was reached in three to five years (Webber, 2009). While Yugoslavia formally kept its sovereignty over Kosovo, it could also be interpreted from the resolution that Kosovo would in the long term take over state affairs, as the period of the interim arrangements was not specified (Webber, 2009). At the end of the war:

> Kosovo was a province lacking proper institutions of governance, the rule of law, public service structures and a functioning economy. It was also the site of a continuing refugee challenge (owing to the return of hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians and the flight of tens of thousands of Serbs), inter-ethnic violence (now directed mainly against Serb and Roma minorities) and burgeoning criminality. (Webber, 2009, p. 454)

2.1.3.A post-conflict context, Kosovo's contested sovereignty

A UN interim administration mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established in June 1999 under Security Council Resolution 1244 (UNMIK, n.d.; Gulyás, 2012; Carapic, 2014). It intended to build autonomous institutions and administration in the region, but not to deal with the status issue. The mission remains active, its current focal points are inter-community trust-building, respect for human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women and youth as reported by

UNMIK[4]. Also in 1999, a mission by the OSCE was installed in Kosovo, designed to monitor the judicial, political and security developments of the country (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2024b). Its mandate is embedded in Security Council 1244 and is reported by the mission to focus on institution-building and human rights (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2024b). The OSCE Mission in Kosovo remains the largest OSCE field operation to this day.

Between 2003 and 2008 multiple rounds of dialogue between Belgrade and Priština were held which each resulted in failure to compromise (Gulyás, 2012). On 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence (Gulyás, 2012; Magocsi, 2018). Some international states immediately recognised Kosovo as a sovereign state, while others have, until present, not recognised its independence (Gulyás, 2012). Kosovo is therefore not a member of the UN General Assembly (United Nations, n.d.). The country remains in a state of contested sovereignty since the formal end of open conflict which leaves the post-conflict transformation of the state in limbo.

Renewed efforts of dialogue, facilitated by the EU, took place between 2011 and 2013 (Gashi & Musliu, 2017; Szpala, 2018). This effort resulted in the 'First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations' (Gashi & Musliu, 2017, p. 533). This agreement, while hailed as a success, is argued by Gashi and Musliu (2017) to overemphasise the role of the EU in the process of the dialogue, disregarding the role of both Serbia and Kosovo. Furthermore, the content of the dialogue is noted to be vague and leaves the relationship between the two countries, and the EU, ambiguous (Gashi & Musliu, 2017).

The interference of the EU and the increased impact of EU discourse has been argued to reinforce the centrality of Eurocentrism (Fábián, 2021). While the country's status is contentious, steps in the EU accession process have been made. A Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU was established in April 2016 (European External Action Service, 2024). Furthermore, an official application for EU membership was submitted at the end of 2022, in this light Kosovo is amending its legislation to harmonise it with the EU requirements (European External Action Service, 2024). While this is not a central aspect of this thesis, it is imperative to keep in mind that EU accession and the harmonisation with the EU acquis communautaire is a key objective of the Roadmaps analysed in chapter eight which were developed in cooperation with the EU (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024).

[4] See: https://unmik.unmissions.org/mandate

Kosovo's contested sovereignty is not central to this thesis, of importance for the research is that data and reports about small arms misuse and its gendered dimensions are reported separately for Kosovo by SEESAC. All references to Kosovo by SEESAC[5] are mentioned to be understood in the context of the UN Security Council resolution 1244 (UN Security Council, 1999).

2.2. Geo-political location of the Western Balkans

The position of the Balkans within Central- and Eastern Europe, but also the European continent as a whole, is important to contextualise since practices of 'othering' within the Western discourse have racialised influences on the position, social and political formations, of the Western Balkans (Fábián, 2021). A helpful concept to contextualise the racialisation of regions within Europe is 'racial triangulation', which refers to a racial ordering within Europe (Parvulescu, 2015). The strict divide between Global North and Global South leaves the region of the Western Balkans hanging somewhere in between (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023). The border between North and South is undefined, this bears the question of who decides these borders and shows how they are drawn across power divides (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023). Scholars within the region have conceptualised its position "as being outside or in-between the North-South binary" (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023, p. 663; see also: Koobak et al 2021; Tlostanova 2012; Blagojevic 2004). This conceptualisation defines the region as semi-periphery and partially privileged in comparison to other regions or groups. This discussion refers to a complex discussion on race and global power relations which would lead us outside the scope of this thesis (O'Sullivan and Krulišová, 2023; Kalmar, 2022; for further reflections see for example: Kanobana, 2024). It is pertinent for this research to reflect on the Eurocentrism of academic research which has marginalised the region in academics (Fábián, 2021). A stereotypical and under-nuanced picture of the region as "plagued with racism, illiberalism, populism or anti-genderism" has been painted through Eurocentric discourse (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023, p. 660). While such issues are present, an under-nuanced analysis neglects a thorough and nuanced understanding of the region (O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023, p. 660).

Issues of SALW proliferation, misuse and GBV are not unique to Kosovo nor the region of the Western Balkans (see eg. Duquet, 2022 for an analysis of gun violence in Europe; or SALW estimates by Small Arms Survey, 2017). While the problem of small arms abuse has been

[5] For UNDP's SEESAC's designation of Kosovo in relation to resolution 1244 see for example: https://www.seesac.org/AVMP/.

recognised in the region, as can be seen in the ongoing SALW control efforts, it is essential to recognise some of the stereotypical images of the Western Balkan which portray the region as culturally violent and revengeful (Getoš Kalac, 2021). Violent stereotypes presume attitudes and behaviour towards SALW are led only by 'cultural traits' or 'traditions' (SEESAC, 2006; Carapic, 2014). These factors are always intertwined with others, such as the socio-economic context, social tensions or perceived sentiments of insecurity. It is important to note that no empirical proof of "a disposition to violence specific to the Balkans" exists (Getoš Kalac, 2021, p. 25). Stereotypical images do not represent an accurate or nuanced picture of reality, the occurrence of violence, and the policies which aim to prevent it are to be studied in their complex and multilayered forms.

2.3. Ongoing issues of small arms proliferation and misuse in Kosovo

The continued efforts against SALW proliferation in the region of the Western Balkans are related to the Yugoslav wars that resulted in the break up of the Republic of Yugoslavia during the 1990s (Božanić, 2022; Duquet, 2022; Getoš Kalac, 2021). A stockpile of millions of firearms was accumulated during this period of political instability (Carapic, 2014). How this accumulation was built differed across the region. The Republic of Yugoslavia had an extensive army and military-industrial complex (Carapic, 2014). When conflicts across the region broke out these military structures came under the control of the Serbian Government (Carapic, 2014). A part of these stockpiles "were allegedly diverted to paramilitary-cum-criminal groups that were backed by the various local governments" (Carapic, 2014, p. 3).

Another source of weapons was smuggling routes used during the conflicts. Due to international arms embargoes both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina relied on smuggling to build their armed forces (Carapic, 2014).

Especially relevant for the case of Kosovo was the looting of Albanian weapon stockpiles after its government collapsed in 1997 (Carapic, 2014). While much of the arms were pillaged by the local population, an estimated 150.000 small arms, were allegedly smuggled across to border with Kosovo and distributed to rebel groups (Carapic, 2014; Pugh, 2014).

Since the influx of small arms in the region through these different routes the illicit possession of small arms in civilian possession significant, despite the increased social and political stability built over the last few decades (Duquet, 2022).

The most recent estimates of civilian-owned firearms date from 2017 (Small Arms Survey, 2017). Small Arms Survey estimated an amount of 436.000 firearms to be in civilian possession in Kosovo

(Small Arms Survey, 2017). This results in an estimate of 23.8 firearms per 100 persons across Kosovo's population of 1.8 million. A different number is reported, also by Small Arms Survey, in an infographics overview which reports 26.3 firearms per 100 inhabitants (2018). The overall position of Kosovo within the region of the Western Balkans and the European continent remains similar in both reports, ranking in the 17th and 18th place of the included countries in the surveys respectively (Small Arms Survey, 2017; 2018).

The overwhelming majority of firearms in Kosovo are estimated to be in illicit ownership among civilians (Karp, 2018a; 2918b; 2018c; SEESAC, 2006; Khakee & Florquin, 2003). The law enforcement and military ownership of small arms is, with 30.500, a lot lower than estimated civilian possession in the country (Karp, 2018b).

Of the 436.000 estimated firearms among civilians in 2017, 43.206 are reported to be registered, while 392.794 are estimated to be unregistered (Small Arms Survey, 2017). Earlier estimations from 2006, through a SALW survey conducted by SEESAC in Kosovo, reported 33.936 firearms to be in legal possession among civilians and an estimated 317.000 arms to be in illegal possession among individuals and non-state groups (SEESAC, 2006). This indicates a slight increase in gun ownership over time. It is, however, not possible to say with certainty whether the presence of SALW in Kosovo has significantly changed since the 2000's. A report by Small Arms Survey in 2003 reported estimates of between 330.00 and 460.000 firearms to be in civilian possession (Khakee & Florquin, 2003). This estimation covers both the most recent estimates (Small Arms Survey, 2017), as well as the estimates by SEESAC in 2006. The illicit nature of SALW ownership has consequences for accurate data collection and reporting, but also for voluntary surrender and destruction. These limitations also apply to the data used in this thesis.

Within the region of the Western Balkans, Kosovo is estimated to have a lower number (23.8/100) of firearms per 100 inhabitants compared to Montenegro (39.1/100), Serbia (39.1/100), Bosnia and Herzegovina (31.2/100) and North Macedonia (29.8/100), but higher compared to Croatia (13.07/100) and Albania (12.0/100) (Small Arms Survey, 2018; 2017).

To contextualise the scale of the SALW issue in Kosovo further it is of note to mention its position within the broader European context. Significant differences in firearms estimations exist across Europe. Kosovo is the 11th country on the European continent on the list of SALW estimates for 2017 (Small Arms Survey, 2017; 2018). Interestingly, nordic countries, report high estimates of firearms in civilian possession. Finland for example, has an estimated number of 32.4 arms per 100 individuals (Small Arms Survey, 2018; 2017). Other European countries with high estimated

numbers of SALW are Iceland (31.7/100), Austria (30/100) and Norway (28.8/100) (Small Arms Survey, 2018; 2017). On the other side of the spectrum countries such as Scotland (5.6/100), Poland (2.5/100) and the Netherlands (2.6/100) are estimated with significantly lower estimates of arms per 100 persons (Small Arms Survey, 2017, 2018).

It has to be noted that, while Small Arms Survey uses different methods to give a comprehensive overview of small arms ownership, estimates, especially of illegally owned weapons, always have their limitations (Karp, 2018a). However, these estimates do show that SALW proliferation isn't confined to the Western Balkans within the European context. On the contrary, the estimates by Small Arms Survey indicate that SALW proliferation is high in several countries across Europe (Small Arms Survey, 2017). These observations disrupt the stereotypical image of the Western Balkan as inherently violent and show the diversity of SALW ownership across the continent (Getoš Kalac, 2021).

The number of intentional homicides in the Western Balkans has been diminishing since 1995 and most of the countries average in 2016 was under the global average but above the average of other Southern European or Western European countries (Božanić, 2016; Carapic, 2014). This trend only accounts for lethal incidents, injuries or threats with the use of a firearm are not included, while they are reported to be used regularly as a threatening tool (Božanić, 2016).

In regards to the import and export of SALW, Kosovo reports that the country does not trade in SALW in the progress reports linked to the Roadmaps (see eg. SEESAC, 2023a). The World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers (WMEAT), which was published from 2009 to 2019, also reports no import or export of arms to or from Kosovo (US Department of State, 2021).

3. Conceptual Framework: Feminist Peace Research and Critical Security Studies

The theoretical foundations of this thesis will built on feminist peace research and critical security studies. These theories guide the lens and approach of the analysis. They are briefly sketched first before key concepts and ideas related to the aims of the thesis are discussed. Because most concepts are central to each strand of research, literature from both is used to sketch how concepts such as continuums of violence, intersectionality and everyday violence have been described.

3.1. Mapping key theoretical premises

3.1.1. Feminist peace research

The main theoretical and methodological foundation of the thesis builds on feminist peace theories. Due to its critical and holistic characteristics, feminist peace research allows for a nuanced and attentive analysis of the gendered dimensions of small arms violence in Kosovo (Väyrynen et al., 2021).

A vast range of different methodologies and epistemologies exist within the field of feminist peace research. This multiplicity makes it a rich field of conversation and discussion on topics including but not limited to; gender inequalities, continuums of violence and structural causes of conflict (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). A consequence of this diversity is that different strands within the field have somewhat different definitions of key concepts such as gender or depart from varying epistemologies (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Parashar, 2013). Some feminists adhere to a binary understanding of gender as men and women, while others argue that gender is a socially constructed concept which is continually renegotiated and performed (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Parashar, 2013; see for example Butler, 1988). This thesis departs from the latter definition. Gender is seen as one factor which, among many others, shapes individuals' opportunities, privileges and restrictions to act (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Lebrun, 2019). The concept of gender has been used to attribute characteristics, not only to people but also to institutions, states and non-state actors as a tool to separate and order them (Sjoberg, 2016). Gender is, however, not fixed; differences between genders are created, repeated and reinforced through performative acts and institutional factors of a specific context (Butler, 1999; Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Åhäll, 2018). Due to the available data, this thesis remains largely within the binary of cis-women and cis-men, however, it encourages to

look beyond and between these relations for the plurality of gender and questions the normalised binary of men/women.

Within the range of visions on the means and goals of feminist peace, a commonality between feminist scholars is their goal to highlight the structural causes of inequalities and strive to disrupt them (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024).

This thesis positions itself within this feminist conversation, due to its multiplicity it is useful to summarise a few key characteristics of feminist peace research central to the analysis before looking at the key theoretical cornerstones of the thesis. Firstly, peace will be defined as a process rather than a singular event, within which challenges, tensions and violence are always present (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Feminist peace, therefore, allows to investigate critically the (everyday) acts of violence within peace. Second, violence in a feminist sense, is not limited to physical violence but includes "violence exerted through social structures, [and] institutions" (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024, p.2). Violence manifested through patriarchal systems, is built upon hierarchies between groups of people and is rooted in the social fabric of societies (Väyrynen et al., 2021). These aspects have led to the contestation of the war/peace dichotomy and move towards the notion of continuums of violence (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). This entails that peace should not be defined as total absence of violence because this would neglect the diverse kinds of violence present in societies labelled as peaceful (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Such a perspective connects acts of violence at the level of communities with violence at the level of institutions, where gendered hierarchies are created, recreated and projected onto violence at the micro-level (Gentry et al., 2019).

3.1.2.Critical- and feminist security studies

Two specific strands of security studies are of relevance to the aim of this thesis: critical security studies (CSS) and feminist security studies (FSS). Within their *Introduction of Critical Security Studie*s, Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2021) include feminist perspectives as a sub-section of critical security studies. Other scholars specifically locate their work within Feminist Security Studies (for example Wibben, 2011; O'Sullivan & Krulišová, 2023; Sjoberg, 2016). This section will sketch some of the relevant insights from and evolutions within both critical- and feminist Security Studies.

Firstly, since no strict definitions exist of what makes CSS 'critical' it is imperative to explain what it means to use a 'critical' perspective in security studies. The prefix refers to "a rhetorical device" under which scholars, adhering to similar perspectives and practices of research, compile their work (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). It is a position through which the world is observed and analysed. A critical perspective departs from issues of change and aims to shift attention to actors who have remained marginalised or voiceless, striving towards emancipation (Krulišová & O'Sullivan, 2022; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). In doing so, CSS recognises that, due to the social environment in which knowledge is built, the focus of research necessarily highlights some factors and explanations, while excluding or under-highlighting others (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). These foundational aspects overlap with feminist peace studies (see eg. Väyrynen et al., 2021), and form a crucial lens to discover both the progress of and silences within, the approach to small arms control in Kosovo.

Tickner already argued in 1992 that, because violence interconnects across levels from the personal to the international, "any feminist definition of security must therefore include the elimination of all types of violence, including violence produced by gender relations of domination and subordination" (Tickner, 1992, p. 39). This thesis, therefore, defines security as dependent on experience and subject to change over time (Gentry et al., 2019).

Traditional perspectives on security issues have typically focused on institutional actors and topics deemed a 'crisis' or 'exceptional' (Gentry et al., 2019). The meaning-making in what issues are categorised as a 'crisis' is embedded in political processes, influenced by gendered hierarchies, which leave everyday experiences of violence by people in both contexts of conflict and peace outside the scope of analysis (Gentry et al., 2019). The framing of certain instances as a crisis always creates a specific narrative and influences how such events are perceived and the course of action to be taken (Wibben, 2010; Greene & Marsh, 2012). Framing of events "decides, in a forceful way, *what we can hear*, whether a view will be taken as explanation or exoneration, whether we can hear the difference and abide by it" (Butler, 2004, p. 5, emphasis in original). Such narratives shine a narrow headlight on certain questions and explanations while leaving other issues, experiences and histories in the shadows. This is a methodological cornerstone of this thesis as the lens through which the narratives on gender in the SALW control framework of Kosovo are analysed.

Feminist scholars, from FPR and FSS, have, over the past few decades, built detailed explanations of the dominant gendered hierarchies which shape both the realms of policy-making and academics (see eg. Enloe, 2014; Tickner, 1992; Butler, 1988). Feminist scholarship shifted the lens to socially constructed gendered hierarchies and demonstrated how every narrative is intrinsically created through "gendered ontologies (theories of being) and epistemologies (theories of knowing)" (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 59). The objective of a critical feminist lens is to break down these patriarchal structures and propose alternative perspectives on power and violence, as complex, intersectional constructions, shifting the focus to how security is embodied and experienced by individuals (Wibben, 2010; Sjoberg, 2016). This aim is directly linked to the objectives of this thesis as it explores how the differentiated impact of SALW proliferation and misuse is incorporated into the Kosovo small arms control framework (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). By contextualising the intersectional connections between gendered small arms violence it urges to look at the complex underpinnings of such violence and the differences in experiences of small arms violence based on gender.

3.2. Key theoretical concepts

3.2.1. Continuums of violence

One of the corner concepts guiding the analysis is continuums of violence, a concept first coined by Liz Kelly (1987) to explore how the legitimation of daily violence induces sexual violence. Attention to the continuums of violence throughout time and space shifts the focus to how violence, underscored by unequal structures, is experienced by different individuals (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Arimatsu et al., 2022; Kostovicova et al., 2020). As described by Väyrynen et al. "the continuum of violence reflects a holistic understanding that interrogates the private and the public, the personal and the political, and blurs the distinction between war and peace" (Väyrynen et al., 2021, p. 105). Direct violence is never an exception observed during conflict, and therefore, always has to be seen as one type of violence within a broader continuum of violence which existed before, and will exist after the formal end of armed violence (Gentry et al., 2019; Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Choi et al., 2023). Tickner (1992) argues that the continuums of violence become obvious when looking from the perspective of women's experiences of violence, which stretches from wartime violence to structural, cultural and domestic forms of violence across times of conflict and peace.

The binary of conflict/non-conflict obscures this continuation of violence across periods of time (Väyrynen et al., 2021). Gendered violence especially is marginalised when the analysis of violence is narrowed to conflict-affected contexts, because all acts of violence in non-conflict contexts, or the aftermath of war, fall outside the scope of such a definition (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Furthermore, different types of gendered violence are interconnected, for example, physical acts of gender-based violence stand in relation to structural violence of gender discrimination and gender hierarchies (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Therefore, to understand and change violent phenomena, such as gendered SALW misuse, structural factors producing and reinforcing this violence have to be interrogated. The distinction between peace/war overshadows the lived experiences of intertwined gendered forms of violence in all contexts (Arimatsu et al., 2022; Sjoberg, 2016). Contextualising violence in terms of the structural causes and long-term legacies which legitimate it, is crucial for policy actors to take holistic actions (Väyrynen et al., 2021). It is this connection between structural and manifest types of gendered small arms violence which is contextualised in chapter seven.

3.2.2.Intersectionality

A concept highlighted by feminist peace scholars to enhance our understanding of complex social issues is intersectionality (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Like the concept of continuums of violence, it broadens and deepens our understanding of the impact societal structures have on everyday experiences of violence. An intersectional approach centres the complexity and multifaceted nature of social issues and explores the impact of factors, such as gender, race, age or ability on a person's experience (Féron & Väyrynen, 2021). Small arms proliferation and misuse are examples of such complex issues, and an intersectional analysis will help to contextualise them in relation to different societal factors in chapter seven. While the focus of this thesis is on the gendered differences of small arms violence it has to be placed within an understanding that other social factors such as ethnicity, religion, class, age, etc. influence how insecurities are perceived and experienced (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021).

The concept of intersectionality was first put forward by black feminist scholars and activists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991). Crucial to an intersectional understanding is that experiences can not be understood as being impacted by and/or factors, rather the sum of all social factors influencing someone's experience is greater than those factors separately (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality enables an understanding of differentiated experiences by communities or

individuals (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). In addition to this, the concept of matrices of domination,helps to see how power is distributed in a society and how inequalities ultimately determine a person's experiences (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Both concepts are crucial in a feminist analysis of complex social issues, such as gendered small arms misuse.

3.2.3. Gender-based violence

To analyse gendered dimensions of small arms violence, the first and second research questions largely focus on a specific type of SALW misuse: gender-based violence and domestic violence involving a firearm. Gender-based violence refers to violence perpetrated against a person due to their perceived sex, gender- or sexual identity (Acheson, 2020; Lebrun, 2019, Väyrynen et al., 2021). This definition recognises the impact of GBV against diverse gender identities, including men, women and non-cisgender identities. GBV affects individuals personally but is also a systemic issue which includes domestic violence, intimate partner violence, gender discrimination and violence during conflict (Väyrynen et al., 2021). These types of violence are deeply rooted in structural understandings of hierarchical relations between genders (Väyrynen et al., 2021). Women and LGBTQIA+ people make up the majority of victims of GBV (Acheson, 2020). However, men are also subject to GBV, such as forced recruitment, sexual violence or domestic violence (Acheson, 2020). GBV against men tends to aim at humiliating or feminising those who are considered to fall outside the gender norms or are deemed as 'other' (Lebrun, 2019; Acheson, 2020). A feminist approach analyses all patterns of GBV as appearing due to patriarchal gender assumptions (Sjoberg, 2016, Väyrynen et al., 2021). The threat or act of gender-based violence thus has to be seen within a wider system of patriarchal hierarchies and norms (Väyrynen et al., 2021).

Applying the concept of continuums of violence, a feminist analysis links types of GBV perpetrated during conflict to patterns of GBV before the onset of war and after the return of relative peace (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). This type of analysis connects the continuums of violence to continuous patriarchal power dimensions and gender roles which facilitate GBV throughout time. Domestic violence in peacetime is an important example of continuums of violence after conflict. The rise of domestic violence has been linked to fluctuations in economic property, patriarchy and political tensions, with heightened numbers of domestic violence in periods of economic crisis (Gentry, et al., 2019).

3.2.4.Patriarchy

Gendered differences are seen as natural in many contexts and perceptions of gender identities, norms and roles are embedded into the social and political fabric of society (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Cockburn, 2004). Feminist scholars have argued that gender discrimination and gender-based violence have to be researched by paying attention to dominant political, economic and social structures (Tickner, 1992). These structures are permeated with patriarchal power relations that enforce power differences between men, women and other genders. A patriarchal system refers to hierarchical structures which attribute dominant social, economic and political power to certain groups of people, often white, cis-gender men (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). Since patriarchal hierarchies are embedded in the social fabric of societies, it is not only reproduced through actions but also through silence (Arimatsu et al., 2022). A feminist interrogation of these structures highlights how gender discrimination is constructed and how types of violence are interconnected (Arimatsu et al., 2022).

Patriarchy pervades all political, economic and social levels and therefore has to be seen as a global, international issue which affects how (in)security is defined and distributed (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021; Sjoberg, 2016). It is the specific rendering of spaces and roles and not set differences between genders which shape experiences of security (Sjoberg, 2016). Gender categorisations and assumptions of gender roles impact who determines who and/or what security is and thus influence research and policies on how to achieve security (Sjoberg, 2016). Gender-based violence, such as SALW-related domestic violence, has to be seen as a political instrument of power which is rooted in such patriarchal power systems (Väyrynen et al., 2021). Violence in this regard can be a means to maintain patriarchal relations (Väyrynen et al., 2021).

While not the primary focus of this thesis, it is relevant to note that a feminist analysis reveals the impact of economic factors on patriarchal relations. The undervalued stance towards social or unpaid work and the masculine structures of the market economy are linked to community and household dynamics and centre a hierarchy of domination which both reinforces and creates patriarchal norms and behaviour (Gentry et al., 2019; True; 2012). Such patriarchal relations create insecurities for women and gender minorities and turn them invisible in policy and academic discourse (Sjoberg, 2016). The connections between economic factors and gender-responsive arms control will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

3.2.5.Hegemonic and militarised masculinities

Next, hegemonic masculinity, a concept developed by Raewyn Connell (2005, 2020), is useful to grasp how structural gendered expectations manifest in specific visible actions. The concept refers to a set of traits that form an unrealistic and stereotypical image of masculinity (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Masculinities are a set of gender practices and behaviours that are socially constructed in relation to the social definitions of other genders and patriarchal relations and can be performed by all genders (Väyrynen et al., 2021). This dominant form of masculinity forms a binary between what is deemed as strong and powerful, or masculine, and weak and sensitive, or feminine. It creates a hierarchy not only between genders but also between men, as the illusionary ideal becomes superior to subordinated masculinities (Tickner, 1992). In reality, most men do not fit the hegemonic image which rules at a specific moment in time and space.

Within the dominant set of hegemonic masculine traits, violence can be seen as an acceptable performance of masculinity (Väyrynen et al., 2021). Intersectional differences of, among others, race, class and age are entangled with these gendered norms and influence how power is distributed (Väyrynen et al., 2021).

Hegemonic masculinities are perpetuated through militarised discourse (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; see also Enloe, 2000). The dominant notions of masculinities in many contexts are entangled with militarism and weapons. Discourse linking masculinity to arms naturalises discourse, images and acts of violence by men through which the “'militarization of the everyday' becomes invisible” (Gentry et al., 2019, p. 32). Militarised masculinities reinforce and promote patriarchal hierarchies between and within different genders and legitimate the use of violence inside military environments, but also in non-military settings, such as domestic spaces (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Väyrynen et al., 2021; Enloe, 1993). In the discourse surrounding militarised masculinities, an opposition to weak and negative notions of femininities is exploited to promote a specific patriarchal order (Gentry et al., 2019). A militarised notion of masculinities puts an expectation on men to prove themselves as strong and aggressive (Tickner, 1992). Such structural ideas underlie not only military strategies but also societal behaviour as a whole. As with all concepts in feminist research, military masculinity is not seen as solidified, but rather as a plural and constantly renegotiated concept in which multiple forms of military masculinities are present (Väyrynen et al., 2021; Balbon, 2024). As with all gender identities, militarised masculinities are performative, it is in its imitations that it is created, enforced and potentially changed (Väyrynen et al., 2021; Butler 1990).

While hegemonic and military masculinities are important concepts to understand the intersectional complexities of gendered small arms violence, it is important not to revert to an essentialist understanding of gender, in which it is assumed that men are perpetrators of violence and women are the victims who suffer from it (Väyrynen et al, 2021). This would neglect the diverse experiences of both men and women. For this reason, the concept is seen as a hegemonic set of traits related to masculinity which can be performed by anyone and importantly has negative consequences for all genders (Väyrynen et al, 2021). For example, the intersection of poverty and gender norms makes young men vulnerable to performing gender norms and become victims of gender-conforming violence by other men (Väyrynen et al, 2021). As will be described in chapter seven, this is especially pertinent to attitudes and behaviour towards small arms in Kosovo.

3.2.6.Multi-level interactions between types of violence

Gendered small arms violence is a direct manifestation of violence, linked in its foundation to structural and cultural forms of violence which normalise specific types of violent behaviour (see eg. Väyrynen et al., 2021). In order to understand such manifestations it is, therefore, necessary to examine both the motivations of the individual perpetrator and the societal structures surrounding it (Gentry et al., 2022).

The typology of different kinds of violence, direct, structural, and cultural, is foundational within peace studies (Galtung, 1969). The categorisation, coined by Johan Galtung, is helpful to see how violence transects the micro-, meso- and macro-level. Structural violence refers to acts of violence exerted through structures and institutions from the local to the global level (Väyrynen et al., 2021; Galtung, 2013). Through a process of normalisation, it turns actions of direct violence invisible and shapes the perception of what is recognised as violence (Gentry et al., 2019). Before the act of domestic violence, for example, structural violence may be exerted through patriarchal power relations within the household which eventually leads to physical violence (Cockburn, 2004).
The process of normalising violence through cultural and symbolic discourse is defined as cultural violence (Galtung, 2013; Gentry et al., 2019). It creates the perception that direct and structural violence are legitimate, or are at least not negatively perceived (Galtung, 2013).

The original typology does not take into account how gendered structures intersect with the construction of violence (Gentry et al., 2019). Gendered power relations, norms and structural

inequalities are pertinent to understand the process through which certain types of violence are turned acceptable (Väyrynen et al., 2021; Confortini, 2006). The typology also deceivingly makes it appear as if barriers exist between each type of violence (Galtung, 2013). In reality violence, such as direct, cultural and structural violence, but also epistemic, epistemological or slow violence, produce and reinforce each other (Gentry et al., 2019). These are two important lenses through which the analysis of this thesis has been conducted.

3.2.7.Everyday violence

A relevant concept, which recurs in both feminist peace studies and critical security studies is the notion of everyday violence. This concept reflects experiences of violence in everyday settings which often become seen as normal or habitual and tend to go unnoticed (Gentry et al., 2019). The gendered dimensions of SALW violence researched in this thesis consist of such types of everyday violence.

Everyday violence in peacetime is embedded in gender dynamics at the local and international levels (Gentry, et al., 2019; Féron & Väyrynen, 2024, Sjoberg, 2016). The space of the everyday consists of intertwined power relations which shape the mundane experiences and attitudes of people. Gendered power structures do not always change in the transformation from conflict to peace, as gender equality has often been neglected in post-conflict reconstruction (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Attention to mundane spaces can deepen our understanding of how gendered insecurities are built and reproduced (Sjoberg, 2016).

Within security studies everyday violence is a concept which redirects, the usual unit of analysis away from the state to the individual (Gentry, et al., 2019). Feminist scholars have continuously argued for increased attention to the embodied experiences of individuals to explain the differentiated impact of structural inequalities (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). A focus on the individual highlights the complex identities and fluid and multifaceted existence of people within a community and broader society (Gentry, et al., 2019).

The concept of the everyday has been critiqued for its tendency to romanticise this sphere (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). It is a space “in which acts of securitisation both take place and are contested by individuals and communities” (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 222). Such acts of securitisation can be seen in small arms violence in peaceful societies, such as Kosovo, as it forms a vast source of insecurity at the level of the everyday.

4. Research on Small Arms and their Gendered Dimensions

The third strand of literature underpinning the analysis is research on small arms and light weapons, this section specifically zooms in on gendered dimensions of SALW proliferation, ownership and misuse.

4.1. Definitional scope of small arms and light weapons

The category of small arms and light weapons is often defined differently by various state institutions and international instruments (Jenzen-Jones & Schroeder, 2018; Greene & Marsh, 2012). For the purpose of this thesis, SALW will be defined following the ARES arms and munitions classification system (ARCS) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) developed during the United Nations (UN) small arms process (Jenzen-Jones, 2022; UNGA, 2005). In these definitions, small arms generally refer to portable weapons of less than 20 mm in calibre which can be distributed easily and are used by military and police but also by general civilians. Light weapons are portable weapons which can be carried by a crew of no more than five persons (Jenzen-Jones, 2022; UNGA, 2005). Any weapon under this classification which is designed or can be converted to shoot a bullet or other projectiles is classified under the ITI as a small arm or light weapon (UNGA, 2005).

All weapons used in the incidents reported by the Armed Violence Monitor Platform by SEESAC are classified as small arms, the large majority are in the category of handguns[6] (eg. SEESAC, 2024e).

The terms small arms, firearms and SALW will be used interchangeably to refer to the full small arms industry of small arms, light weapons and their ammunition (LeBrun, 2019).

4.2. Importance of gender-sensitive small arms research

Small arms are widely available not only among security actors but also among civilians, due to easy mobility, production and use (Farr, et al., 2009). They affect people of all ages and genders and their proliferation is central to a vast array of different types of violence. Small arms are used in the built-up to conflict, within wars, as well as in post-conflict or peaceful societies and domestic settings (Farr et al., 2009; LeBrun, 2019). The impact of SALW abuse has gendered effects, as different types of violence impact people in different contexts and with different identity markers in

[6] This trend has been observed since the first published Quarterly Report in 2020.

distinct ways (Farr et al., 2009; Acheson, 2020). Because of this, a careful and systematic discussion on the gendered dimensions of armed violence in small arms control policies is pertinent.

Farr et al. (2009) highlight the limited integration of factors such as gender and age in research or policymaking of small arms. However, LeBrun (2019) notes that meaningful participation of all genders and an understanding of the gendered impact of SALW violence has been widely agreed to be essential in arms reduction and control. Strong evidence has demonstrated the differentiated impact of small arms-related violence on different genders, which is often related to different underlying structures and assumptions about gendered norms (LeBrun, 2019, Popović, 2021; Farr et al., 2009). An analysis of the use of small arms in gender-based violence and domestic violence by the UNDP (2021) highlights the ongoing need for research which systematically considers gendered aspects of small arms, specifically related to gender-based and domestic violence, to counter the abuse of small arms in this area.

The integration of 'soft' aspects, such as gender, however, remains contested in the space of international arms trade and policymaking, which is regarded as one of the "'hardest' areas of international security" (Stavrianakis, 2020, p. 153). States are protective over their right to import, export and regulate arms internally as they please and deem it an existential issue to the safety of the nation-state (Cockburn, 2012). However, almost all illegally owned weapons, by which most violence in non-conflict settings is committed, are at first legally brought onto the market (Frey, 2017). This makes legal arms production and trade an essential site of discussion to counter the misuse of SALW in all types of violence.

4.3. Evolution of research on small arms and light weapons and its gendered dimensions

Literature on SALW increased in the 1990s when the academic focus shifted from arms competition to arms used during civil wars (Green & Marsh, 2012; Stavrianakis, 2020; Frey, 2017; Cockburn, 2012). Before this SALW issues existed in the margins of research and policy-making debates which mainly centred around nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, despite the high death toll of small arms (Cockburn, 2012). At the end of the millennium recognition grew that issues of small arms proliferation were not new, rather the international attention towards them was (Stavrianakis, 2020). Next to this, the early 1990s brought an increase in small arms proliferation due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia which released a large number of weapons onto the black markets (Cockburn, 2012; Satia, 2018; Esparza et al., 2021).

What differentiates SALW from other weapons, such as nuclear or chemical weapons, is that a large segment of small arms is in possession of civilians or non-state actors (Karp, 2018a, Cockburn, 2012). They are present before the onset of conflict, remain a major means of warfare and continue to disrupt lives in the aftermath of conflict and peace. They cross the "time- and space- continuum of violence" and are widespread among the general population of many countries around the world (Cockburn, 2012, p. 211). This aspect of ownership increases the relevance and urgency of SALW initiatives and further demonstrates their complexity.

Because of the immense impact on human life, early research and cooperation in the 1990s searched for quick solutions to SALW proliferation and abuse (Green & Marsh, 2012). This approach, however, overlooked the complexity of these issues and the intersectional aspects of small arms (Green & Marsh, 2012). Progress was made after the turn of the millennium. The field of small arms research has largely been developed in two schools, each with different focal points (Green & Marsh, 2012). The US scholarship mainly researches the causation between arms proliferation and violence in the domestic area of the US (Green &, Marsh, 2012). The second research community grew in the European context, with literature focusing on the relations between SALW and conflict-affected states (Green &, Marsh, 2012). Transitional areas such as Eastern Europe after the fall of the USSR and the SFRY with high numbers of arms proliferation formed the main case studies of research within the European context (Green & Marsh, 2012; Cockburn, 2012).
This categorisation of schools shows the Western- and Eurocentric scholarship on SALW. This demonstrates a limitation in cultural and geographical perspectives which have shaped this field of literature and has implications for case study research such as this thesis.

At the time of writing Greene and Marsh noted that little interaction existed between the two research communities and "major uncertainties and gaps in knowledge on the ways in which arms and patterns of armed violence are linked" were still present (2012, p. 1). Both academic and policy debates on armed violence, therefore, lacked a comprehensive understanding of the implications small arms have on violence (Greene & Marsh, 2012). Research on SALW has neglected its relation to specific contexts and, conversely, research on specific violent contexts has tended to see SALW as secondary, instead of investigating their social, political and economic implications (Greene & Marsh, 2012). The literature has established that small arms have vast impacts on insecurity and the degree of injuries in all contexts across the world, whether in conflict-ridden societies or spaces

which are deemed relatively stable (Greene & Marsh, 2012; Farr, 2002). While it might not be possible to prove causation between arms availability and eruptions of violence, case studies in Naples and Nairobi suggest that SALW act "as a multiplier of violence", but their presence is not sufficient to explain increases in violence (Greene & Marsh, 2012, p. 135). Next to this, a noticeable increase in arms flow on black markets throughout societies, especially influxes of weapons after conflict makes small arms easily available and increases the vulnerability of, especially younger, groups of people (Kostovicova & Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2012).

Apart from academic research, feminist activists have long argued that arms proliferation adds to insecurities (Arimatsu et al., 2022). Predecessors of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) already "highlighted the negative impact of arms proliferation on gender relations and peacebuilding as early as the First World War" (LeBrun, 2019, p.18; Acheson, 2020; Väyrynen et al. 2021). Disarmament is therefore seen as imperative to obtain sustainable forms of peace by global organisations such as WILPF (Acheson, 2020; Väyrynen et al. 2021).

Early research on small arms demonstrated the importance of armed violence in contexts which are generally regarded as peaceful (Greene & Marsh, 2012). By the early 2000's it had been demonstrated that the proliferation of SALW "were at least potentially significant for all categories of crime, violence and insecurity within non-conflict societies, including: gender-based violence; community violence; gang-related violence; suicide; domestic violence; street crime and organised crime." (Greene & Marsh, 2012, p. 89). Specific research on the gendered aspects of gun-related violence became more developed around 2004, recognising the complex and intersectional ways in which armed violence affects different genders (Greene & Marsh, 2012). Especially the work of Vanessa Farr, and the first volume investigating the gendered dimensions of small arms published in 2009, were important tilting points in the maturity of research on the intersections between SALW and gender (Farr, 2002; Farr et al. 2009, Green & March, 2012; Cockburn, 2012). Feminist research has since explored issues such as the impact of the misuse of specific weapons on women and how the rise of domestic violence links to the proliferation of conflict legacy weapons post-conflict (Väyrynen et al., 2021). Before this women were mostly depicted in roles of passive victimhood, while research and international strategies of arms control were approached within and from the perspective of masculinised structures, without directly referencing the impact of weapons on men (Green & Marsh, 2012; Enloe, 2014).

Similar to increased academic attention, concrete actions to counter the proliferation and misuse of small arms increased around the turn of the millennium (Cockburn, 2012). The first binding agreement was the 'Nairobi Declaration' adopted in 2000 by twelve states in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lake Region (Cockburn, 2012, p. 214). Later that same year the UN held a conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which resulted in the UNPoA, which, although not legally binding, remained the most important international agreement on small arms until the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2013 (Stavrianakis, 2020; Acheson, 2020). Although limitations to its scope and implementation can be observed, the ATT remains pathbreaking in its inclusion of a clause which demands export-states to take the likelihood of GBV involving small arms in the country of destination into account (Acheson, 2020).

Before the ATT gender aspects were long absent in the array of international initiatives on small arms (Stavrianakis, 2020; Green & Marsh, 2012). Furthermore, references to gender were long equated to women, only in 2006 at a PoA conference "statements that referred to gender raised effects upon males as well as females" were made, not only to the victimhood of women, but recognising that men make up the majority of victims of armed violence (Greene & Marsh, 2012, p. 91).

4.4. Gendered dimensions of small arms

4.4.1. Engendering the production, ownership, misuse and victimhood of small arms violence

To understand the complexity of SALW violence it is important to pay attention to the gendered trends of SALW ownership and misuse. Men make up the overwhelming majority of firearm-related deaths and injuries, although particular segments of the male population are more likely to be affected than others (Farr, et al., 2009; LeBrun, 2019; Maletta, n.d.; Frey, 2017; Farr, 2002). Next to this, men form a disproportionate percentage of small arms owners, both professionally since police and military are still predominantly male and among civilians (Lebrun, 2019; Farr, 2002).

The likelihood of encountering gun violence is also gendered by type of violence and place (Farr, et al., 2009; LeBrun, 2019; Myrttinen, 2020). Men are most often targeted in the public space, encountering public disputes or criminal violence (Farr et al., 2009). Frey (2017) reports that men make up eighty per cent of all homicide victims, a trend which has been observed since 2004. Women more often encounter SALW violence in the private space and make up a disproportionate

share of victims of domestic and intimate partner violence involving firearms (Farr, 2002; Frey, 2017; Väyrynen et al., 2021). In regards to GBV, SALW can be used to wound or kill but also to threaten and facilitate other types of violence (LeBrun, 2019; Maletta, n.d.). While tackling the widespread ownership of small arms will therefore not eradicate all types of violence, the presence of a gun in the house does increase the risk of DV and its lethality up to five times and is therefore imperative to take seriously. (Getoš Kalac, 2021; Greene & Marsh, 2012; Maletta, n.d.; Popović, 2021, LeBrun, 2019). Despite its global impact an intersectional and holistic reading of the gendered dimension of SALW issues remains largely absent from SALW policies and international initiatives (Farr, et al., 2009).

Small arms are not only gendered in their use, but the whole lifecycle, from manufacturing to ownership, policymaking and destruction of SALW is gendered (LeBrun, 2019). In most societies, men dominantly control the high-level positions in charge of determining the production, import, export and licensing of small arms (Frey, 2017). Poor stockpile management or careless licensing of arms have gendered impacts as insufficient control results in heightened chances of theft or high proliferation of small arms among civilians (Lebrun, 2019; Savona & Mancuso, 2017). High numbers of SALW in the home can, in turn, be used in eg. domestic violence and suicide (LeBrun, 2019, Maletta, n.d.).

It is important to note that the observations outlined above in no way pose to be ‘universal truths’, this would obscure other categories of victims, such as cis-gendered male and gender minority victims of domestic violence and female perpetrators of small arms violence (Frey, 2017; Féron & Väyrynen, 2024).

4.4.2.Different perceptions of safety related to small arms

While men are disproportionately affected by SALW misuse, this is not reflected in attitudes or perceptions of safety related to small arms (Farr et al., 2009; Farr, 2002; Tickner, 1992). Scholars have pointed out that women tend to have more negative attitudes towards firearms and express more concern about arms-related violence (Farr et al., 2009; Farr, 2002; Tickner, 1992). The sentiment of fear of armed violence was already brought up by Tickner in 1992 who highlights the concrete effects fear of armed violence might have on the mobility of women which may in turn affect access to, for example, job opportunities. Following this trend of perception, women tend to be more in favour of strict arms reduction policies (Farr et al., 2009). Although this does not

represent the attitudes of all women, it is an important factor to take into account in policies sensitive to gendered experiences of SALW violence (Farr et al., 2009).

4.4.3.Issues of underreporting and aggregated data

An obstacle to tackle the gendered dimensions of small arms violence is the lack of data, especially aggregated by gender, on different types of SALW misuse. The use of weapons as a threat, for example, is not visible in statistics of deaths or injuries which makes it hard to get an overview of the bigger picture (Farr, et al., 2009). In addition, data on small arms violence, and especially GBV involving small arms, is incomplete, tends to be siloed in categories of either SALW violence or GBV, and often goes unreported (LeBrun, 2019; Gentry, et al., 2019; True, 2012). This results in an inadequate availability of data to fully understand the gendered impact of SALW violence, and GBV involving a firearm more specifically (Obiagelo & Okorie, 2021). Next to this, methods of data categorisation often vary across institutions, an act of femicide can, for example, be classified either as domestic violence or as a homicide (Popović, 2021; LeBrun, 2019; Kaser, 202). This lack of aggregated and comparable data makes it harder to get an intersectional understanding of the interrelated impact of gender norms, gun violence, GBV and attitudes towards small arms (Myrttinen, 2020; Maletta, n.d.). Aggregated data by, at least, gender and age, is, therefore, crucial to make gender-responsive arms control strategies possible (LeBrun, 2019).

4.4.4.Intersectionality

Next, it is imperative to emphasise that gender is not the sole determinant of behaviour and vulnerability towards SALW, many intertwined aspects are at play (LeBrun, 2019). Age is an extremely important aspect to take into account, as young men are four times more likely to encounter small arms violence (Frey, 2017). Next to this, young men are also more likely to become involved in gun-related incidents as perpetrators (Farr, et al., 2009). Farr et al. (2009) also argue that urban/rural divides, regional aspects and political-economic differences have an impact on opinions towards firearms. Gun violence is a deeply complex phenomenon which is constructed and reinforced by many intertwining social factors, these intersections will be further explored in the context of Kosovo in chapter seven.

An intersectional approach allows us to analyse the issues of SALW-involved violence in all its complexities (LeBrun, 2019; Farr, et al., 2009; Myrttinen, 2020). The literature has demonstrated the significance of gender in ensuring holistic and relevant policy-making. However, the existing

research remains mostly within a binary definition of gender as male/female, indirectly reinforcing the patriarchal structures it seeks to disrupt (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). The focus of research on victims of armed violence has most often been on cisgender women, this neglects the experiences of different gender identities with SALW abuse (Hagen et al. 2021). LGBTQIA+ people suffer disproportionately from SALW proliferation, this makes research on the impact of gun violence, and the strategies to counter it, regarding gender and sexual minorities a crucial gap in the existing literature (Väyrynen et al., 2021; LeBrun, 2019).

4.4.5.Gendered structures and norms

Experience with and attitudes towards guns are not only dependent on intersectional characteristics, they are influenced by structural norms and assumptions about factors such as gender (Farr, 2002; Frey, 2017). However, research and discussions on the role of social and political gender norms in shaping how people behave and interact with SALW are still lacking (Obiageli & Okorie, 2021; Farr et al., 2009). The feminist theories explored in chapter three, have pointed out that differences between genders and the roles they are assumed to fulfil are presented "as natural, rooted in biology, and confirmed in history" in many societies (Cockburn, 2004, p. 27). A gender analysis of SALW control programming aims at "uncovering the differentiation and asymmetry of masculine and feminine as governing principles, as idealized qualities, as practices, as symbols" (Cockburn, 2004, p. 29). However, Greene and Marsh (2012) notice that some studies use terms such as 'gun cultures' in an ungrounded manner without regard for the complexity of social, cultural and political norms. The theoretical conceptualisations outlined in chapter three are meant to support a nuanced analysis of the gendered dimensions of small arms violence throughout the analysis of this thesis.

Feminist scholars and organisations such as the International Action Network on Small Arms[7] (IANSA) and WILPF[8] have been actively highlighting how socially constructed norms surrounding masculinities and femininities influence gun violence (Cockburn, 2004; Acheson, 2020). Farr (2002) emphasises the need to analyse how gender ideologies and social structures influence the different manifestations of gun violence for men and women.

SALW play a significant role in sustaining gender hierarchies which are built upon the domination, of a specific group made up of mostly cisgender men (Farr, 2002; Frey, 2017). Socially constructed

[7] For more information on the work of IANSA see: https://iansa.org/womens-network/

[8] For more information on the work of WILPF see: https://www.wilpf.org/

expectations of gender roles in many societies shape attitudes towards small arms and create destructive and harmful hierarchies between men and women (Maletta, n.d.; Božanić, 2016; Frey, 2017). Such an unequal gender order has legitimated male civilian ownership of small arms through a discourse of protection of women, who are painted as passive and defenceless in the face of potential danger (Frey, 2017). In contrast, it has become obvious that SALW ownership results in increased chances of small arms violence at home (Lebrun, 2019).

A crucial aspect of norms prescribing gender roles in many societies is how they shape attitudes and behaviours of young men related to small arms (Frey, 2017; Myrttinen, 2020). It has been demonstrated that men make up the majority of small arms owners, perpetrators and victims, it is therefore crucial to understand how gender structures influence why some men obtain small arms (LeBrun, 2019; Farr, 2002; Cockburn, 2004). To do this, Lebrun (2019) argues that successful arms initiatives and research should look into the expectations of masculinities in specific contexts. Notions of masculinity in relation to disarmament have, however, long been neglected in academic research (Farr et al., 2009).

Next, in order to work towards disarmament and eradicate arms-related gendered violence, it is not only crucial to analyse expectations of hegemonic masculinity but also to encourage different expressions of masculinity (Cockburn, 2012; Farr et al., 2009). However, this has proved a hard task as long as the producers of SALW, experts and policy-makers are dominantly men and military training adheres to ‘the aggressive male’ as a cornerstone of training (Tickner, 1992). State institutions are crucial in decision-making processes and most have tended to produce and reproduce a patriarchal order, favouring values of militarised masculinities (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). Such political and popular discourse can create and reinforce gendered narratives of firearms. An example of such popular discourse is ‘the Marlboro man’ used in advertisements for cigarettes which portrayed guns as a sign of power and strength (Farr, et al., 2009). It is an example of how norms around masculinities are “sold to audiences” (Farr, et al., 2009, p.32). It is, therefore, crucial to take into account these underlying expectations related to masculinities and femininities, to grasp how structural norms guide attitudes towards SALW.

4.4.6.Gender-responsive small arms control

In conclusion, the literature on gendered dimensions of small arms has demonstrated clear gendered experiences related to gun violence. While it disrupts the lives of all people, a gender-responsive analysis shows that gender dynamics influence the types of violence people are more

likely to encounter (Farr et al., 2009; LeBrun, 2019). A gender-transformative goal to small arms strategies takes into account the underlying political and social norms which create and recreate gender inequalities and legitimate the dominant ownership and use of SALW by men and aims to challenge this (LeBrun, 2019). International initiatives of SALW control and policies combatting GBV and DV have long neglected the gendered structures at its cause (Krizsán & Roggeband, 2018; Stavrianakis, 2020).

To significantly reduce arms proliferation and gun violence, attitudes and expectations of gender roles, concerning both masculinities and femininities, have to gain central attention (LeBrun, 2019). This requires a holistic and intersectional approach to arms control, fully recognising the gender inequalities which perpetuate small arms-related violence. Such gender-sensitive policies need to include the perspectives of groups which remain marginalised in research until today, such as gender and sexual minorities (Väyrynen et al., 2021). By building on the feminist insights described above, this thesis aims to connect small arms violence to "patriarchy, racism, militarism, and capitalism to build a broad agenda for change that crosses issues and identities" (Väyrynen et al, 2021, p. 132).

4.5. Evolution of research on SALW misuse in the Western Balkans

Chapter two established that small arms remain a means of violence throughout the region of the Western Balkans and significant amounts of SALW are held by civilians (Small Arms Survey, 2017). This section explores the activism and research on gendered dimensions of small arms present in the region.

4.5.1. Activism and early research

Political discourse during the Yugoslav war did not incorporate a gender perspective and reports did not detect the differentiated gendered experiences of conflict and the different attitudes held towards it (Cockburn, 2004). A gender analysis would have helped to foresee distinct reactions to the war. Gender studies emerged and grew across Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990's and 2000's (Fábián, 2022). Former Yugoslavia is described as an important hub for these new research topics. In the region an urgency existed for research on the violence perpetuated during the conflicts of the 1990s, especially wartime rape and violence based on national identity were critical topics of research (Fábián, 2022). Initiatives tended to come from civil society or nongovernmental

organisations. Two examples are the Kosovo Women's Network[9] (KWN), a network, established in 1996, which now counts 140 member organisations and advocates for women's rights, focusing on gender equality, the eradication of GBV, economic empowerment and gender-sensitive education. The second example is the Network of East–West Women (NEWW), a network connecting activists working on gender equality in Central- and Eastern Europe and Eurasia (KWN, 2022; Fábián, 2022). Many women in former Yugoslavia were associated with such initiatives for gender justice (Fábián, 2022).

Feminist activism was, however, not a new phenomenon which arose after the war, eg. the Yugoslav Feminist Network existed from 1978 to 1991 (KYEOL, 2023).

4.5.2.Increase in attention: the establishment of SEESAC

The most extensive research on the gendered dimensions of SALW in the Western Balkans is conducted by SEESAC. In 2016, two years before the start of the first SALW Control Roadmap (2018), they published a report which developed a tool to increase the gender responsiveness of SALW policies (SEESAC, 2016). Their findings state that, at the time, the gendered impact of SALW was "neither recognised nor adequately addressed by legislative and policy frameworks regulating SALW control in SEE" (Božanić, 2016, p.7). Research has, however, shown that the role of gender and other intersectional norms in attitudes, demands and use of SALW in the Western Balkans are important factors in comprehensively fighting small arms violence (Božanić, 2022). Substantial progress in the legal and policy foundations has been made in the last decade to ensure that the use of small arms in the home is prevented by law (Božanić, 2022). It is, however not clear whether these recent efforts trickle down in practice. Božanić (2022) notes that institutions struggle to incorporate a systematic gender focus, and reports that debates on the gender implications are still lacking in policy-making of small arms control. The Roadmaps and National Action Plans are argued to have pushed for the integration of gender-responsive actions towards SALW (Božanić, 2022; SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Chapter eight will explore how, and to what extent, the gendered dimensions of small arms are incorporated in the current approach to small arms control in Kosovo.

Similar trends to the broader literature on small arms about the gendered nature of gun ownership and (mis-)use are found in the region of SEE (Božanić, 2016, Getoš Kalac, 2021). SALW are

[9] For more information: https://womensnetwork.org/about-us/vision-mission/.

significantly more often in male ownership and men represent the majority of intentional homicide victims but also the majority of perpetrators of SALW violence across the region (Božanić, 2016). Incidents between strangers most often involve men, while women are more often victims of intimate partner violence (IVP) (Getoš Kalac, 2021). Military service and militarisation are observed to impact the likelihood of SALW misuse in the domestic setting negatively (Božanić, 2016, p.29). Getoš Kalac (2021) notes that women are also more involved in domestic violence as perpetrators, compared to other types of violence, but this is not confirmed by quarterly reports an the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform by SEESAC (eg. SEESAC, 2024e). Another consequence of the gendered ownership of guns is visible in suicide statistics, indicating that the majority of suicides by gun in the Western Balkans are men (Božanić, 2016).

Gender roles and expectations of masculinities and femininities in the region shape SALW behaviour, which results in gender-specific risks related to gun violence (Božanić, 2016; Božanić, 2022). Any long-term strategy should pay attention to the interconnections of "guns, violence, power and masculinity" and underlying structures which shape attitudes to small arms in the region (Božanić, 2016, p. 31; UNDP, 2021). It is necessary to interrogate how notions of masculinity shape SALW behaviour, but also how small arms proliferation creates and reinforces gender hierarchies and impacts how policies are made (Božanić, 2022). Next to this, it is essential not to "slide into the inference that all men are violent" (Božanić, 2016, p. 30). It is important to interrogate the underlying gender assumptions both when perpetrators or victims are men, women, or of a gender minority. The intersectional experiences with SALW violence require attention to aspects, which are described as untraditional in discussions on firearms, such as "gender-based violence, masculinities or participation of women in arms control" (Božanić, 2022, p. 8).
Next to gender; age, location and the relationship between perpetrator and victim have been identified as important explanatory factors of armed violence (Božanić, 2016). An intersectional approach to arms control is thus crucial to tackling the issues of small arms in the Western Balkans.

Another similarity of the region with the literature outlined above is the issue of data regarding the gendered dimensions of SALW violence. Especially the misuse of small arms in the domestic setting frequently goes unreported and gender-disaggregated data on SALW misuse is still lacking in the region (Božanić, 2016; 2022; UNDP, 2021). Chapter eight will discuss the centrality of this aspect to the ongoing efforts of SALW control.

5. Methodology, Methods and Data

5.1. Using a mixed-method approach to contextualise gender and small arms violence

The analysis of the thesis is divided into three sections which correspond to the research questions outlined in the introduction. The first chapter analyses reported incidents of firearms-related domestic violence to investigate the gendered dimension of such violence and its evolution over the past ten years in Kosovo. It aims to answer sub-research question one: How can an analysis of gendered dimensions of small arms-involved domestic violence in Kosovo between 2014-2025 inform research on small arms control? The second section, centres around sub-research question two: How do societal factors contextualise gendered dimensions of small arms violence? This chapter explores different intersecting societal factors which underpin the gendered dimensions of small arms violence, mostly focussing on GBV and its nexus with SALW. The last research question more specifically explores how this complex relation is incorporated into the small arms control framework of Kosovo which consists of the regional SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024), the corresponding Kosovar action plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024) and the progress reports by SEESAC (see eg. SEESAC, 2024). The two first sub-sections will come together here to provide an answer to the third research question: Based on the SALW Control Roadmaps and the corresponding Kosovo Action Plans, how are the gendered dimensions of small arms violence incorporated in efforts of small arms control in Kosovo?
This mixed-methods approach will help in constructing a comprehensive overview of the complex relation between gender and SALW and deepen the understanding of its representation in the SALW control framework of Kosovo.

The overarching methodological approach of the analysis is a critical feminist methodology (Ackerly & True, 2020). The theoretical conceptualisation has outlined the relevant concepts and frameworks from feminist peace studies and critical and feminist security studies. These theoretical scholarships shape the dynamic, indirect, feminist epistemological lens, or theory of knowledge creation, which guides the perspective of the thesis and locates it within the broader existing literature (Ackerly & True, 2020; Fryer & Navarette, 2024). A feminist epistemological lens is both relational and committed to being inclusive in its perspectives, by including voices which are often silenced (Väyrynen et al., 2021). A feminist, relational epistemology is furthermore; “open to untidiness, complexity, and coexisting contradictions” within its analysis (Väyrynen et al., 2021, p.

3). In line with this, the methodology of the thesis is of a critical feminist nature. Central to such a feminist analysis is the attention to the power of epistemology, how it is created, what it prioritises and how it shapes certain views on what can be known (Ackerly & True, 2020). As Ackerly and True describe: "[A] feminist methodology is not a set of particular methods or guidelines for research, like a protocol, but a commitment to using a whole constellation of methods reflectively and critically" (2020, p.6). A critical feminist perspective will guide the critical inquiry and ensure reflexivity throughout the analysis (Ackerly & True, 2020). This implies that the research has been informed by critically reflecting on decisions, positionality and assumptions, to ensure a thorough analysis of the gendered dimension of small arms proliferation (Ackerly & True, 2020). At the core is a reflection of how power impacts the relations between SALW and gender. Throughout this process, questions on what to include in the analysis and decisions on how the research is conducted were used as critical reflections on the research process (Ackerly & True, 2020). How the research is conducted is an extension of the theoretical framework. The decision to use a critical feminist methodology and mixed methods is in conversation with the underlying feminist epistemological lens and can not be seen separately from it. Next, the specific use of certain concepts and methods used to analyse each research question will be outlined.

5.2. Conceptual clarifications

The concepts gendered small arms violence and SALW-involved GBV or DV, while closely related, each cover a different scope of violence. Gendered small arms violence and gendered dimensions of small arms refer to all gendered types and characteristics of the full SALW lifecycle (as used in eg. LeBrun, 2019; Farr et al., 2009). SALW-involved GBV and DV apply to a specific type of SALW violence; gender-based violence and domestic violence and is therefore one manifestation of the gendered nature of small arms misuse. Gender-based violence has already been defined in chapter three, as violence directed against a person based on their perceived sex, gender or sexual identity (eg. Väyrynen et al., 2021; Acheson, 2020). Domestic violence makes up one type of gender-based violence.

5.3. Overview of methods

5.3.1. Research Question One: Descriptive Statistics

The first research question investigates the evolution of domestic violence incidents with the involvement of small arms. To do this, data from the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform[10] developed by SEESAC was used. The monitor was developed in 2014 and therefore now spans a timeline of a little over ten years. The scope of the analysis is limited to one type of violence reported by the AVMP: domestic violence involving a firearm. While other settings, such as criminal or public disputes, also show gendered dimensions, the scope of this thesis did not allow for an analysis of the full monitor, as a dataset had to be created manually. In the decision-making domestic violence was deemed most relevant for this analysis, because it recurs as a specific and persistent factor under research question two and is directly linked to gendered dimensions of SALW violence in the SALW Control Roadmaps, as will be discussed under research question three (2018; 2024).

The AVMP provides the following information per incident: location, date, time, type of incident, weapon and possession type[11]. Next to this, it also includes the perpetrator-victim relationship, the result of the incident, micro-location (if known) and a short description of the incident. From 1 January 2014 until 11 January 2025, 208 incidents of domestic violence with the presence or use of a firearm were reported on the platform. The time period of reports included in this analysis represents all reported incidents from the start of the AVMP until the creation of the database used to conduct the quantitative analysis of the data.

The platform gathers data on firearms incidents from seven countries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The data is based mostly on media reports, online search engines and reports by public institutions when made public (SEESAC, n.d.a). In Kosovo, the police do provide short public records of firearms incidents (SEESAC, 2022c).

The data on the monitor is not numerical, therefore, to analyse the evolutions of firearms-enabled domestic violence in Kosovo, cases were quantified into a coherent dataset. This was done through

[10] Find the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform here: https://www.seesac.org/AVMP/

[11] For examples visit: https://www.seesac.org/incident-reports/.

Excel to come to a dataset which could be imported into SPSS. Two additional variables were extracted from the descriptions provided with each case: the gender of the victim(s) and perpetrator. Not sufficient descriptions included the age groups of victims and perpetrators, this variable therefore could not be created.

Next, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Frequencies were analysed for the following variables: month, year, type of weapon, type of possession, gender of victims and gender of perpetrators. To add another layer of analysis, cross-tabulations were performed on different variables in order to understand gendered patterns of SALW-involved domestic violence. From the data generated in SPSS, single- and multi-variable graphs were created in excel.

The analysis remains within descriptive statistics and does not aim to claim correlations, rather it shows the characteristics of domestic violence with the presence of a weapon over the past ten years. Next to the quantitative analysis, analytical reports conducted by SEESAC, zooming in on the characteristics of victims or perpetrators of SALW violence in a specific year or on specific types of violence, such as DV, are included in the analysis (see eg. SEESAC, 2020c, 2022c, 2023c).

5.3.2.Research Question Two: Systematic Literature Review

The second research question aims to map the complex factors which underpin and reinforce the gendered dimensions of SALW violence and firearms-induced GBV more specifically. The critical feminist methodological approach is especially important in guiding the investigation of this section (Ackerly & True, 2020). The process of reflexivity and attention to intersectionalities guided the decision-making process of what factors to include. At the same time the attention to what or whom is left out of the discussion, or attention to the power of epistemology, is of great importance in this process, as it is impossible to provide an exhaustive analysis of an issue as complex as SALW abuse (Ackerly & True, 2020; Väyrynen et al., 2021). It is relevant to repeat here that the positionality of the researcher as an outsider poses limitations to knowledge about the specific characteristics of the context and therefore limits the possibilities of knowledge-creation on the felt experiences of SALW violence and the impact of the SALW control framework in Kosovo.

The factors which were identified as intertwined with SALW misuse and its gendered dimensions in Kosovo are; patriarchal gender norms; organised crime and trafficking of illicit goods; employment; minorities; trust in institutions; militarised masculinities; nationalism and international interventionism. Previous research on the impact of these factors, often in relation to either gender norms, GBV or small arms proliferation and misuse, was analysed in a systematically to map the

complex contextual factors which intersect, create and reinforce the relation between gender and small arms (Ackerly & True, 2020). Because little research exists which directly discusses gender, SALW and contextual factors together, research focusing on a specific contextual factor in relation to either small arms or gender aspects, such as GBV and gender discrimination, is discussed to build an overview of some interconnecting societal factors which influence the gendered dimensions of SALW misuse.

Literature was searched and analysed continuously throughout the research process. Different search engines such as google scholar and Web of Science were used to source relevant existing research. Next to this, reports by the Kosovo Women's Network and international actors such as the OSCE Mission in Kosovo were sourced from the respective websites of the organisations[12].

5.3.3.Research Question Three: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The core methodological approach to answer the last research question is Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). The method will be used to investigate how a gendered perspective is included, in the regional SALW Control Roadmaps and Kosovo's national action plans for its implementation (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, 2024). Next to this, bi-yearly progress reports, conducted by SEESAC, on the steps taken to fulfil the goals of the Roadmaps are analysed to map whether specific actions against gendered small arms abuse have been taken since the start of the Roadmaps (SEESAC, 2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b; 2022a; 2022b; 2023a; 2023b; 2024a). The progress reports cover the period between the start of the first Roadmap in 2018 and the first half of 2024, the last year covered under this first Roadmap.

The first SALW Control Roadmap was adopted in July 2018 after extensive discussions between the six participating states and the EU, and consultations at the local level in all states. The Roadmap aimed to create sustainable measures to end SALW misuse and trafficking and harmonise the legislation of the six jurisdictions to a coherent regional legal framework which is in accordance with the EU acquis communautaire, the UNPoA and the ATT. (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018) During the last year of the first Roadmap, 2024, a revised version was agreed upon for the period

[12] For more information see: https://womensnetwork.org/category/publications/research-reports/; https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo.

2025-2030. The aim of this revised Roadmap remains the same and focuses on evidence-based mechanisms for arms control (SALW Control Roadmap, 2024).

In response to the regional Roadmaps, each participating state has adopted a national action plan outlining the concrete measures to meet the requirements outlined in the Roadmaps. The first action plan by the Kosovar government was already adopted in 2017 and only outlined planned actions up to 2021 (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). The action plan outlines activities to progress towards the objectives outlined in the Roadmap, it also concrete indicators to measure the progress of each objective of the Roadmap (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). Next to this, it includes specific deadlines and responsible institutions for each activity as well as the funding source and expected outcome. The second action plan runs between the period 2024-2028 and includes a more extensive narrative explanation of the responsible institutions, legal frameworks and strategy objectives to achieve the objectives under the second Roadmap (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024). Otherwise, the structure remains the same, activities for each objective are briefly outlined together with deadlines, responsible institutions, funding institutions and expected output. In addition, an estimate of the total cost of each activity is included (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024).

Thematic analysis focuses on uncovering patterns or themes within data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Reflexive TA is a systematic qualitative method in which creativity, reflexivity and the subjectivity of the researcher are seen as useful qualities (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Through interpretation the researcher uncovers patterns and stories from the data, it does not seek to find universalist truths but rather focuses on reflective knowledge creation. These characteristics complement the feminist methodology of the research and allow space for dynamic, non-linear research. Thematic analysis is suitable for small and medium-sized datasets which fit the scope of the research question (Herzog et al., 2019). While TA is often used to analyse interview data it is also possible to use it for the analysis of documentary and policy data (Coffey, 2013; Herzog et al., 2019).

Reflexive TA applies a systematic approach to coding and theme development which entails multiple rounds of analysis from generating initial codes to mapping themes and patterns by going through the data until the themes cover all relevant aspects before discussing and interpreting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach ensures a rigorous qualitative research method without losing fluidity or reflexivity. Six concrete phases were developed to describe the analytical process of TA (Herzog et al. 2019, p.7-9):

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report (Terry et al. 2017, p.14-15)

The three main, intertwined, sources of data which will be used to conduct the analysis are the two SALW Control Roadmaps, the corresponding Kosovar Action Plans and monitoring progress reports by SEESAC (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs; 2017; 2024; progress reports see eg. SEESAC, 2024a). All of these sources are available in English and were downloaded through the website of SEESAC[13]. Reflexive TA was used to analyse how provisions of gender are made in the Roadmaps and action plans, while the progress reports were used to map the concrete actions taken by the Kosovo Government.

The SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) have to be seen within the Berlin process which was launched in 2014 to increase regional cooperation and assist in further integration into the EU. Both Roadmaps were developed in cooperation with the authorities of the Western Balkans with guidance from the Federal Republic of Germany and SEESAC's technical support (SALW Control Roadmaps, 2018; 2024). The Roadmaps are reportedly used as tools to meet some of the security conditions related to membership of the EU and to contribute to SDG 16, more specifically to SDG 16.4, which aims to reduce illegal financial and arms flow by 2030 (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). To achieve these objectives seven goals structure the Roadmaps:

1. By 2023, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, fully harmonized with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations and standardized across the region.
2. By 2024, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are evidence based and intelligence led.

[13] For more information see: https://www.seesac.org/SALW-Control-Roadmap/.

3. By 2024, significantly reduce illicit flows of firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) into, within and beyond the Western Balkans.
4. By 2024, significantly reduce the supply, demand and misuse of firearms through increased awareness, education, outreach and advocacy.
5. By 2024, substantially decrease the estimated number of firearms in illicit possession in the Western Balkans.
6. Systematically decrease the surplus and destroy seized small arms and light weapons and ammunition.
7. Significantly decrease the risk of proliferation and diversion of firearms, ammunition and explosives. (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 8; 2024, p. 8)

Apart from these goals, fourteen key performance indicators have been developed to monitor the progress of the states. Specific guiding questions connected to these indicators are answered by each government in the progress reports conducted by SEESAC (see eg. 2024a).

When further broken down gender is noted as a focal point in goals two and four of the Roadmaps (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018). Goal two reports an objective to increase disaggregated data for gender and age to enable gender-responsive policy-making and “fully integrate gender and age concerns in SALW/fire-arms control policies and ensure meaningful participation of women in SALW/firearms control" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p.12). Goal four notes that “a significant number of suicides and misuse of weapons in GBV is still recorded.” (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p.17). As a means to raise awareness of issues of small arms, the media is noted as an important actor. Referring directly to the issue of GBV involving firearms an objective to “increase awareness and reduce the misuses of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of gender based violence” is included (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p.18).

After an initial read-through of the data, initial codes were marked by highlighting all relevant references to gender or targets in relation to the gendered dimensions of SALW violence. These codes were written into an excel sheet for each of the Roadmaps and action plans to get a first overview of similarities and differences between codes present in each document. Through this process, about 30 codes were identified within each document. Most codes were present in each document but some, such as “toxic masculinity”, were only present in some (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 6). In this early stage codes which arose from the literature, such as femininity,

patriarchal norms or militarisation, were also searched in the documents and reported as absent in the Excel sheet when not used within the documents. This helped in starting the process of identifying silences within the data.

Next, all relevant sections present in the data were copied into a Word document to obtain a single document with all relevant codes across the four documents. This document was used to search for initial themes, after which the data was sorted according to these themes. Initially, codes were sorted under ten overarching themes and absent themes were kept separately. At this stage, themes were given a name to reflect the codes it represented. After multiple rounds of going through the data to ensure all sections were adequately represented, the number of themes was further reduced to five. This reduction resulted from decisions to take two separate themes together under one. The five themes created through this reiterative process of thematic analysis form one section of research question three (chapter 8). As mentioned, the progress reports were analysed to outline the concrete actions taken by the Kosovar government over the past six years. Next to this, the factors outlined under research question two (chapter 7) were applied to the data to interrogate possible silences or limitations in their reflections on the gendered dimensions of SALW violence and its interlinkages to other societal factors.

7.5. Limitations to the methods and data

Every method and methodology comes with its own challenges. Because of the mainly qualitative and case specific nature of the study it will focus on in-depth knowledge creation which means the external validity of the study will be rather low as contextual factors play a major part in the analysis.

The research is dependent on the interpretation and judgment of the researcher. In regards to the second research question, this implies that previous knowledge will partly influence what factors and structures form the starting point of the analysis. The list of included factors does not aim to be exhaustive, rather these factors were identified as relevant to small arms issues through investigation of the academic canon and aim to start a holistic and intersectional conversation on the complex nature of SALW misuse. The puzzle which will be presented under research question two will, however, always be influenced by the individual researcher and by the time and resources at their disposal.

The consideration of individual judgement is also particularly relevant to reflexive TA as a method. Herzog et al. identify this as both a strength and possible pitfall of the method: “On the one hand, TA can be a useful tool for going beyond pre-conceived ideas. On the other hand, due to the complexity of data and the absence of pre-determined and clear-cut classification criteria, it requires a relatively large degree of individual judgement” (2019, p. 5). For this reason, the importance of a systematic and reflexive approach to TA is stressed above.

In regards to the data, a few limitations and challenges are important to note. First, while the main action plans and frameworks seem to be summarised, translated to or provided in English by SEESAC, a language barrier likely affected the data gathering. Academic research used to analyse the second research question was limited to literature written in English, because of the language barrier research conducted by regional scholars in other languages could not be included. Second, as mentioned, the armed violence monitor is based on reports by media outlets and police reports (SEESAC n.d.). Incidents which were not published by the media or reported to the authorities are not included in the database. As seen, domestic violence especially, is often underreported due to a persisting stigma around it (LeBrun, 2019; Božanić, 2022). The platform is, however, the most extensive source of disaggregated data on small arms violence and domestic violence.

Next, data often does not report the use of weapons as threats to facilitate other types of GBV. This means a large aspect of gun misuse is left outside of the picture which will have consequences for the analysis. The violence monitor does include incidents of threats but these are likely underreported as well.

Lastly, the AVMP does not include age in the case characteristics and this could not be separated as a variable because the descriptions rarely mention the victim’s nor perpetrator’s age. This is mainly due to the fact that the daily Kosovo police reports used for the monitor sparsely mention age (SEESAC, 2020d; 2024b). This forms a barrier to perform an intersectional analysis of SALW-involved domestic violence.

Because of its contested sovereignty status Kosovo is not included by all organisations in statistics. This limits the data available for the analysis and prevents a fuller picture of the context. However, the data provided mainly by SEESAC, academic literature and reported statistics do provide a thorough base to investigate the research questions.

6. Evolution of SALW-Involved Domestic Violence and Its Gendered Dimensions in Kosovo

This first analytical chapter aims to provide an answer to sub-research question one: How can an analysis of gendered dimensions of small arms-involved domestic violence in Kosovo between 2014-2025 inform research on small arms control? It outlines the current situation of domestic violence involving a firearm in Kosovo and analyses whether shifts are visible in the number of incidents throughout the ten years the AVMP has been operative. Next to this, it presents an overview of the gendered dimensions of small arms violence to emphasise the relevance and inform practices, of gender-responsive arms control. This analysis establishes the relevance of intersectional and contextualised gender-responsive arms control, further developed in chapters seven and eight.

It is imperative to repeat that none of the case descriptions, included in the AVMP, reported genders beyond the male/female binary, therefore no analysis of violence impacting people outside this binary could be included. This also indicates that domestic violence against non-binary- or transpersons are either underreported or their gender identity is not included in the reports. This lack of data unfortunately continues the neglect of this group in research such as this one.

6.1. Evolutions of small arms-involved domestic violence

Over the past ten years, a vast increase in reported incidents of domestic violence has been observed (see Figure 1). This does, however, not mean that the number of incidents with certainty grew exponentially, the rise may also partly be attributed to increased reporting of incidents by the media and authorities or more thorough quality control by SEESAC (SEESAC, 2020e). Overall, underreporting is estimated to obscure a significant amount of cases, especially when firearms are used to threaten or intimidate (SEESAC, 2020c, 2023c). Specific to domestic violence and intimate partner violence is the proximity to and control of the perpetrator, especially when living in the same space, which makes reporting difficult. While domestic violence accounts for the least amount of recorded incidents in the monitor, it reports the highest proportion of lethal cases throughout the whole region, making it an urgent area of small arms control (SEESAC, 2022c, 2023c).

A notable increase in incidents of SALW-involved DV from 17 in 2020 to 33 in 2021 is visible in Figure 1. While no certain explanations for this rise can be given, the literature points out a surge of DV in Kosovo during the COVID-19 pandemic which aligns with this increase (Dobranja, 2022;

Hasani, 2024). In 2020 a report by SEESAC similarly suggests that the lockdown likely formed an explanatory factor for the rise of 16% between 2019 and 2020 (SEESAC, 2020c). With 45 cases, 2024 became the year with the most reported cases of arms-enabled domestic violence thus far recorded (see Figure 1).

The number of firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence in Kosovo was the highest in the region of the Western Balkans in both 2021 and 2022 (SEESAC, 2022c, 2022e). For comparison, Kosovo reported 35 incidents 2022, while Albania ranked second with 25 recorded cases (SEESAC, 2022c). This confirms the urgency of gender-responsive small arms control in Kosovo. When taking all types of incidents together Kosovo recorded the largest amount of cases in the region between 2021 and 2024, (SEESAC, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e, 2021f, 2022d, 2022e; 2023f; 2024d). Between January and March 2021, for example, Kosovo accounted for 303 of the total reported SALW incidents in the region, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina with 154 incidents of small arms violence. A large proportion of these cases in Kosovo account for weapon seizures (see eg. SEESAC, 2023d).

An increase in firearms incidents across all categories can be noted in Kosovo over the months of July and August, mainly due to celebratory shootings during family celebrations (SEESAC, 2022f; 2021e; 2023f; 2024e). For domestic violence, this differentiation across months is less relevant. Although over ten years there is an indication of more reported cases during the summer months (see Figure two), this is not a steady trend across all years and no pattern of incidents across the months per year was found through descriptive statistics.

The evolution of firearms incidents in domestic violence over the past ten years does not show a visual impact of the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018, 2024) in the number of cases. Since 2021 the lowest number of DV with a small arm across the region of the Western Balkans was noted in the first quarter of 2023 with 19 reported cases (SEESAC, 2023d). The third quarter of 2024 accounted for the most cases with 40 incidents across the region, no clear increase or decrease across the region can be noted between 2021 and 2024 (SEESAC, 2024e). The increase in reported cases in Kosovo since 2014, as visible in Figure 1, could also signify an increase in reporting habits which could indicate a decrease in stigmatisation around DV. However, the literature on stigma and access to shelters, which will be discussed in the next chapter, does not indicate a similar pattern (see eg. KWN, 2023; Avdimetaj, 2022). Another explanation could be that the efforts of the authorities and

media in reporting DV with small arms have increased. The descriptions provided with each case have become increasingly detailed which may point to increased quality of the AVMP or the articles it draws its information from. The monitor therefore does not provide a straightforward answer as to whether the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018, 2024) have had a positive impact.

Figure 1
Number of armed violence incidents recorded each year

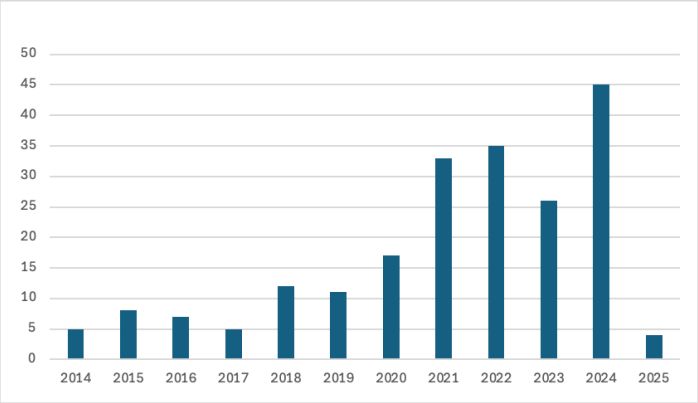
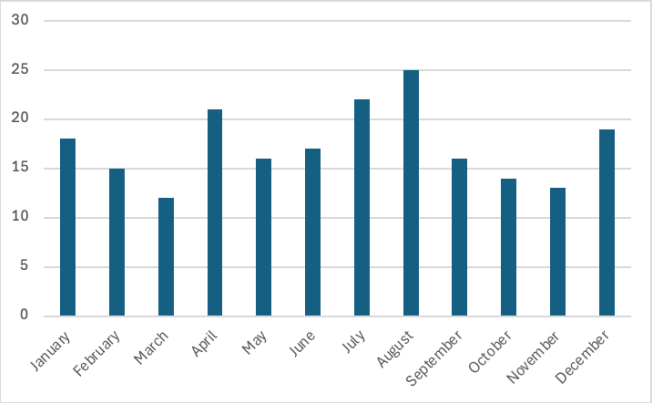


Figure 2
Fluctuation of reported cases per month



6.2. Gendered dimensions of victimhood of SALW-related domestic violence

Next to the gendered likelihood of experiencing domestic violence involving small arms, certain characteristics of the act itself also show gendered dimensions. First, the gendered aspects of victimhood and the relation between victim and perpetrator will be discussed. The reported incidents in the AVMP follow the victimhood pattern outlined in chapter four. Of cases with one victim for whom the gender is known, women make up 60,1%, or 125 out of 208 cases, while men account for 20,7%, or 43 out of 208 cases, of victims of such incidents (see Figure 3). This clearly shows the disproportionate risk for women to encounter domestic violence. However, it also points out that men also experience domestic abuse, which demonstrates the negative consequences of omitting these cases from research on domestic violence as this obscures the experiences of male victims. Across the Western Balkans and all types of firearms incidents women most often encounter violence in a setting of domestic violence or criminal contexts, while men encounter most SALW misuse in public disputes and criminal contexts (SEESAC, 2020e, 2020f, 2021e, 2024b).

The analysis of the AVMP demonstrates that the experiences of men and women with SALW-induced DV are different. The most noticeable difference is the relationship between the victim and perpetrator (see Figure 5). Overall cases, just over half (52,4%) of the 208 reported cases took place between former or current intimate partners (see Figure 4). Two other frequent perpetrator-victim

relationships are the nuclear family and extended family. Domestic violence by persons outside of the family or partner, such as friends, is not reported, although it is unclear what type of relations are counted under the category 'other' which accounts for 11 out of 208 cases.

A clear difference in relationships to the perpetrator exists between male and female victims. In 75,2% of cases with female victims, women encountered domestic violence by an intimate partner, a trend in line with the literature sketched in chapter four (see Figure 5; Getoš Kalac, 2021). On the contrary, no domestic abuse by an intimate partner against a man was reported on the AVMP. The most prevalent relationship of male victims to the perpetrator is within the nuclear family (69,8%), followed by extended family (23,3%) (see Figure 5). The differences in these relationships indicate that the character of domestic violence with a firearm varies when accounting for gender differences, to capture these differences in measures against small arms violence a gender focus is necessary (SEESAC, 2024b).

The consequences of domestic violence with a small arm, as described in Figure 6, show that threatening is the most prevalent outcome for both female and male victims. A report focusing on specific victim characteristics in 2024 notes that domestic violence cases are the majority of incidents where a gun is present but not used (SEESAC, 2024b). The outcome of domestic violence incidents was not reported in 26% of the cases. Although the reasons for this remain unknown it is interesting that women make up the majority of this category, with 38,4% of outcomes unreported for women and 4,7% for men. Figure six shows that a larger percentage of men died due to SALW-involved DV in Kosovo over the past ten years, with 16,3% deaths, resulting in approximately 7 reports of male deaths over the past 10 years. For women, the percentage lies at 7,2%, which translates into an estimated 9 reports of female deaths due to DV with a small arm. Domestic violence incidents cause the highest proportion of deaths in comparison to other types of small arms incidents (SEESAC, 2020c; 2024c). A report on the monitor focussing on domestic violence in 2020 notes that women are more likely to be killed in the setting of domestic violence than any other type of firearm incident (SEESAC, 2020c).

Another gendered observation of outcome is that men were more often, 20,9% compared to 1,6%, reported to have no injury as a result of DV (Figure 6). The image created by the reported outcome might be distorted due to the large proportion of unreported outcomes for female victims.

The use of a small arm in domestic violence also impacts other persons present during the abuse, as they are at risk of SALW abuse as well (SEESAC, 2024b). This can be seen in the categories with multiple victims (see Figure 3).

The differentiated experiences with SALW violence dependent on gender traits demonstrated above make an intersectional approach essential to understanding how different groups are impacted by SALW-involved DV.

Figure 3
Gender of victims

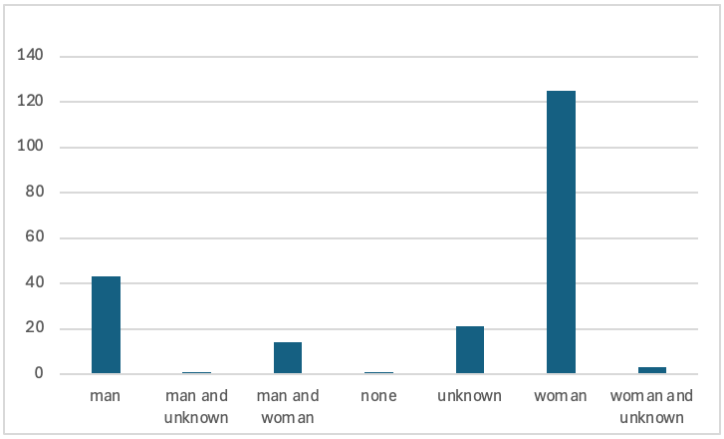


Figure 4
Perpetrator-victim relationships

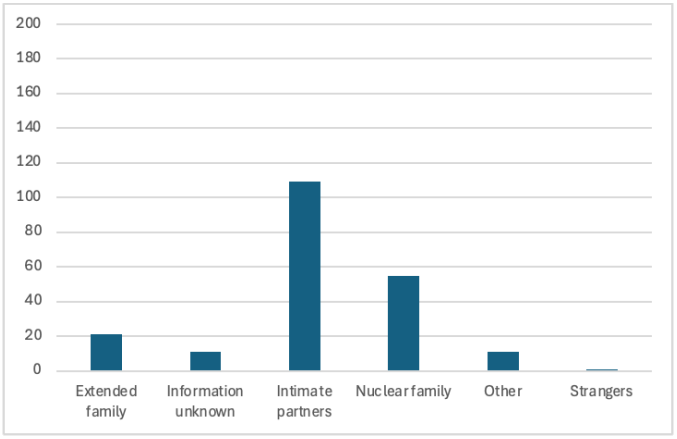


Figure 5
Perpetrator-victim relationship divided by gender of victims

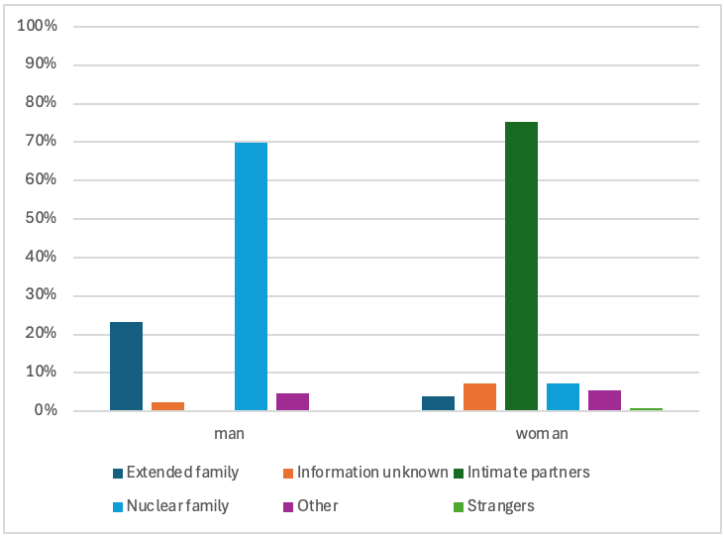
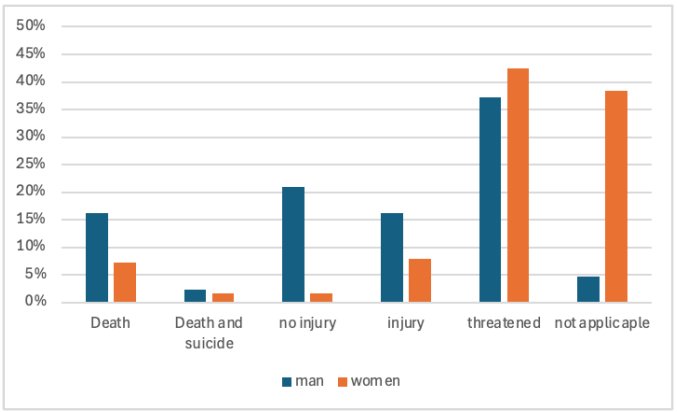


Figure 6
Outcome of armed incidents per gender of victims



6.3. Gendered patterns of perpetrators of SALW-involved domestic violence

In terms of the gendered nature of perpetrators the armed violence monitor overwhelmingly confirms the findings of the literature which indicated a disproportionate share of male perpetrators of SALW violence (eg. LeBrun, 2019). Of all DV incidents reported by the AVMP in Kosovo, men account for 92,8% of perpetrators, while women made up 1,4% of perpetrators of reported incidents since 2014 (see Figure 7). This indicates that women are sparsely in the position of perpetrators and demonstrates that they are disproportionately in the role of victim (Figure 3 above; SEESAC, 2022e; 2020c; 2020d; 2021c; 2023c). These findings are in line with the gendered hierarchies, and norms around masculinities and femininities, outlined in the conceptual framework (chapter 3). The impact of patriarchal gender norms and relations will be further discussed in chapter seven.

The majority of incidents perpetrated by men were directed against an intimate partner (53,4%) or the nuclear family (26,4%) (see Figure 9). The three cases with female perpetrators each reported a different relation to the victim, one against a person of the extended family, one against a member of the nuclear family and one against a stranger. These cases were all directed against men, meaning none of the female victims in the reported cases encountered violence by a woman, although the gender of a small portion of perpetrators against women was not reported (see Figure 8).

In terms of underreporting of a perpetrators gender it can be noted that, while not an included variable in the monitor, the descriptions do aggregate the gender of both the victim and perpetrator in the majority of the cases. The gender of 5,8% of perpetrators and 10,1% of victims remains unknown (see Figure 3 and 7).

Figure 7
Gender of perpetrators

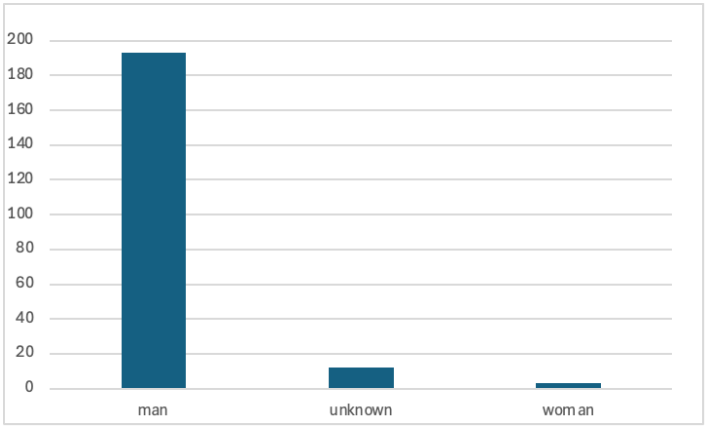


Figure 8
Gender of perpetrator divided by the gender of victims

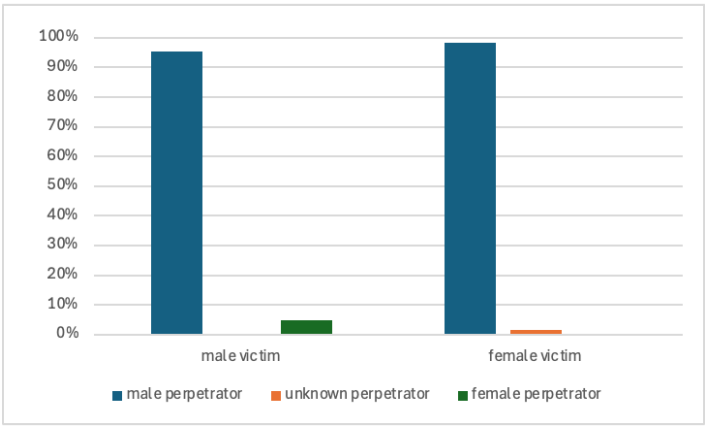
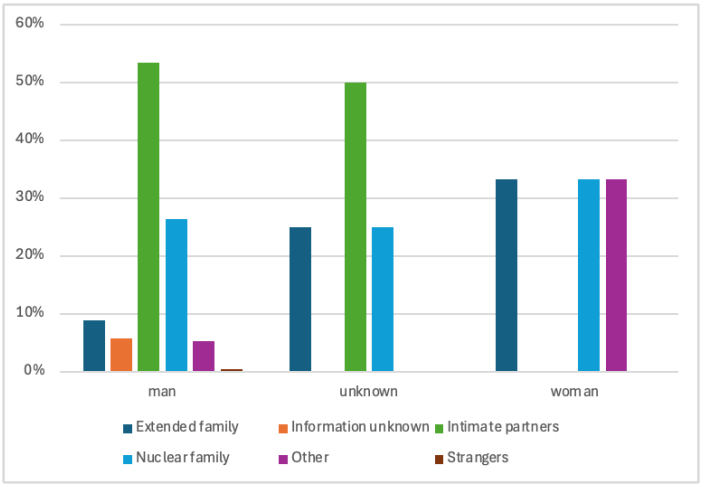


Figure 9
Perpetrator-victim relationship divided by gender of perpetrators



6.4. Gendered use and possession of small arms

Lastly, a brief observation can be made on the choice of weapons by perpetrators differentiated by gender. The handgun is the most prevalent weapon used in cases of DV overall (see Figure 10), reports by SEESAC since 2020 confirm that this trend has remained steady over time (SEESAC, 2020c; 2021c; 2022d; 2023d; 2024c). The type of weapon used to threaten, harm or kill is also gendered. In all reported cases with female perpetrators, a handgun was present (Figure 12). Other weapons, such as rifles or military-grade weapons, were only reported in cases with male perpetrators or when the gender was not reported. Because the cases of female perpetrators are so low, it can not be claimed that this is a steady trend.

Of the weapons confiscated after domestic violence only 9.6% were legally registered, while 52,9% were in illegal ownership and another 37,5% of possession type went unreported (see Figure 11, SEESAC, 2022c, 2021d; 2020d). These trends support the estimates that the vast majority of weapons in Kosovo are in illegal possession (Small Arms Survey, 2017). The type or origin of illegally owned weapons was not reported in the descriptions of the cases.

Figure 10
Type of weapon used in domestic violence

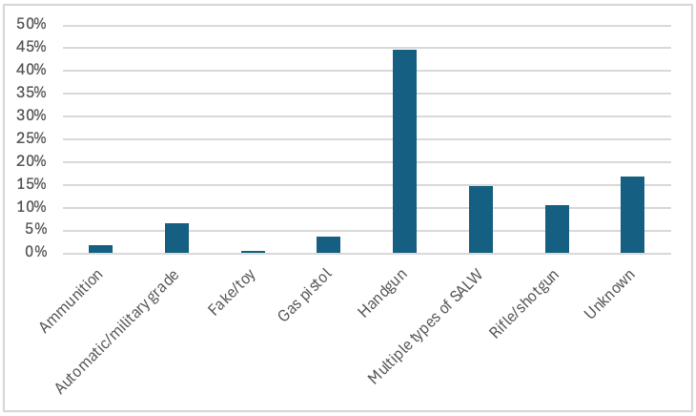


Figure 11
Type of possession of small arms

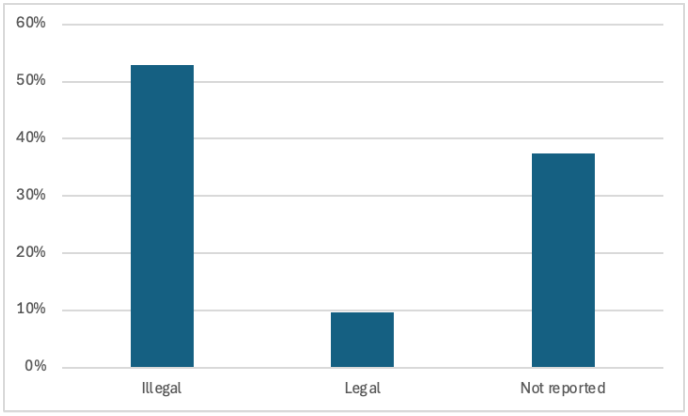
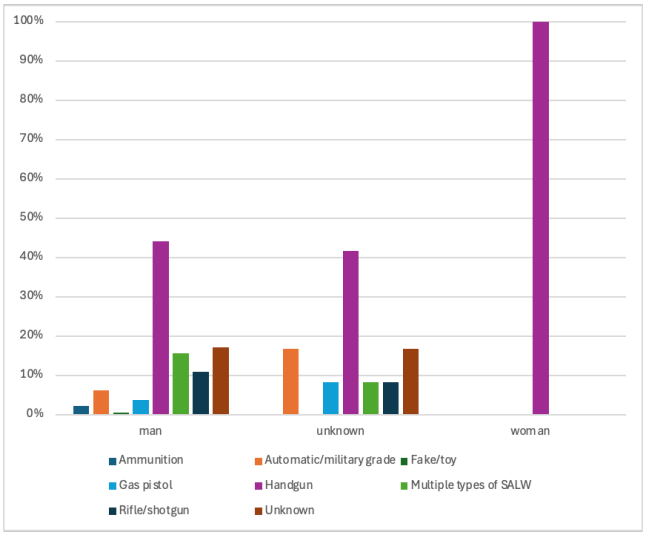


Figure 12
Weapons used divided by the gender of perpetrators



6.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of firearms-related domestic violence incidents in Kosovo demonstrates highly gendered patterns in victimisation, perpetration and likelihood of experiencing SALW-involved violence. The incidents recorded by the armed violence monitoring platform confirm the gendered patterns outlined in previous research; DV involving firearms is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men and disproportionally affects women. However, the analysis of the AVMP also demonstrated the pitfalls of equating victims of small arms-related DV with women, as 20% of the victims over the past ten years in Kosovo were men. The relationship between victim and perpetrator differs significantly by gender, with women more likely to experience intimate partner violence, while male victims more often experience violence from other family members.

Although no clear conclusions can be drawn on the progress made since the inception of the first Roadmap (2018), it demonstrates that the persistence of gendered patterns in domestic violence involving a firearm, recorded since the start of the AVMP, remains concerning today. The gendered patterns uncovered through the analysis of the AVMP demonstrate the limitation of a one-size-fits-all approach to arms control and the need for gender-sensitive small arms control. The findings of this first research question sought to argue for and inform intersectional and holistic arms control policies, demonstrating the relevance of research questions two and three. These insights form the basis for further analysis in the next chapter, which explores the broader social and structural factors which underpin the gendered dynamics of SALW violence.

7. Contextualising Gendered Dimensions of Small Arms Violence in relation to Societal Factors

The gendered patterns found in the analysis of small arms violence in the domestic setting in Kosovo in chapter six complement the literature discussed thus far, which urges us to look at the intersections between patriarchal hierarchies, gender roles and SALW ownership and misuse (see eg. Fetahu, 2015). This section will continue mapping the complex societal interconnections of gendered SALW abuse by investigating how a range of contextual factors intertwine with such violence. Eight different societal factors will be discussed mainly in relation to gender-based violence, gender norms, small arms proliferation and their intersections in Kosovo, as specific literature on most types of small arms violence in relation to contextual factors is still limited. By using a feminist methodology this chapter aims to answer research question two; how do societal factors contextualise gendered dimensions of small arms violence?

7.1. Continuums of violence in Kosovo

Continuums of violence were introduced in chapter three as a core concept to understand the persistence of violence over time. This section will outline the relevance of this concept to understanding gendered SALW violence in Kosovo, more specifically focusing on SALW-related GBV, and GBV more broadly, due to the available literature.

Gender-based violence is not a new issue in Kosovo society (Maguire, 1998; Corrin, 2000). At the end of the 1990s, when tensions and instability were on the rise, an increase in domestic violence was noted by support services for victims (Maguire, 1998). The high level of propaganda discourse centred around violence and 'othering' different ethnic groups played into notions of masculinity, legitimising and encouraging violence (Maguire, 1998). NGOs highlighted the urgency of work on violence against women in the post-conflict contexts of the Western Balkans, an issue mostly neglected in formal international processes (Maguire, 1998; Corrin, 2000). Due to the social stigma to speak of GBV experiences during conflict, women have organised different initiatives to raise awareness around the issue and create channels to voice these traumatic experiences (Akgün et al., 2023). An example of peace activists is the Kosovo Women's Network[14] focuses on the protection of all women's rights, regardless of their intersectional differences such as age, religion and sexual orientation. Among other programmes, they monitor the implementation of legal frameworks

[14] For more information see: https://womensnetwork.org/.

regarding gender-based violence (KWN, 2022). Reports by KWN note that a significant group of people, both men and women, experience domestic violence in Kosovo (KWN, 2022). Next to this, they link GBV to issues of access to education and economic empowerment which persist in Kosovo, aspects which will return in chapter seven (KWN, 2022). Next, the Serbian branch of the organisation Women in Black, an activistic anti-militarist network (Fábián, 2022; Women in Black, n.d.). They have been organising non-violent protests since 1991 and directly make connections between hegemonic masculinity and militarism (Cockburn, 2004; Women in Black, n.d). Cooperation between these two organisations was established in 2006 through the Women's Peace Platform[15]. Another example is the Oral History Initiative, a research collective aiming to highlight experiences of people and stories of histories silenced in official history narratives[16]. Women's organisations have also been at the forefront of fighting for strict small arms control and possession (Browne, 2017). These examples show that active advocacy against gender inequality, GBV and arms proliferation is present, demonstrating the diversity in opinions and attitudes in Kosovo's society. Civil societies' voices have not always been incorporated in policy-making, however, the current SALW control framework, which will be further discussed in chapter eight, includes an objective to increase cooperation with civil society actors (SALW Control Roadmaps, 2018; 2024).

The return to relative peace after the Kosovo War was characterised by a high number of domestic violence incidents and a return to traditional gender norms, rolling back the changes in gendered roles witnessed during the conflict (Maguire, 1998). The easy access to weapons, trauma and high rates of poverty contributed to this increase in DV. Browne (2017) notes that men involved in the armed conflict were more likely to use a small arm in domestic violence. It can, however, not be stated that only, or all, men who participated in the war became more violent in the domestic setting or reverted to the use of small arms.

Confirming the theoretical conceptualisation outlined earlier, GBV and domestic violence in Kosovo have impacted people's lives before, during and after the conflict (Corrin, 2000). GBV during the war took on a different character as it became part of a war strategy (Corrin, 2000; Akgün et al., 2023). The support for victims and recognition of their suffering during and after the war remained absent (Hoxha & Andresen, 2021). International organisations did not fully take into account different gendered experiences of the war (Corrin, 2000).

[15] For more information visit: https://zeneucrnom.org/en/activities/women-s-peace-platform-kosovo.

[16] For more information visit: https://oralhistorykosovo.org/

The number of long-term shelters for DV victims and other services remains limited (Browne, 2017; Fetahu, 2015; KWN, 2023). There are currently eight active shelters across Kosovo, however, victims of domestic violence more often seek help in Centres for Social Work (Corrin, 2000). These centres were established in 1974, before the breakdown of former Yugoslavia. During the war the work of these centres was limited and the reconstruction and funding to pay out salaries to staff members only returned in 2000 (Corrin, 2000). For a lot of women who do seek help in shelters, violence has been recurrent for quite a while, pointing to underreporting at the onset of domestic violence (Avdimetaj, 2022). Oftentimes the work of shelters focuses on reconciliation, which doesn't enhance independence and contains a danger of recidivism (Avdimetaj, 2022). The perception of DV as a 'private issue' influences the resources of these shelters, resulting in poor management, and long procedural mechanisms of bureaucracy, which hamper low-threshold access to help (Hasani, 2024; Akgün et al., 2023; Avdimetaj, 2022; Coenders, 2020). Another barrier is the lack of awareness about the availability of resources and shelter houses, this can increase the sense of vulnerability and loneliness in a victim's experience which may result in a choice to remain silent (Hasani, 2024). Lastly, almost all resources cater for female victims of domestic violence, there are no shelters for male victims of DV and little focus on resources for other types of GBV in Kosovo (Browne, 2017).

The Kosovo Police recognises the scope of domestic violence in the country, on its website eight awareness-raising campaigns around the topic of domestic violence in the family are reported (Kosovo Police, 2024; Kosovo Police, n.d.). Many people, nonetheless, have little knowledge of the resources available or don't know the emergency number (Hasani, 2024; Coenders, 2020).

7.2. Impact of patriarchal gender hierarchies and norms

7.2.1. Patriarchal roots

Patriarchal values, attributing a dominant position to men in many areas of society, will be a recurring factor throughout the analysis presented in this chapter. Kosovo remains a context with dominant patriarchal norms (Browne, 2017; Hasani, 2024; Akgün et al., 2023; Arënliu et al 2019; Kaser, 2021). The reinforcement of gender roles in which women are expected to nurture and care results in the legitimisation of GBV against women when they divert from their gendered expectations (Hasani, 2024; Arënliu et al., 2019). Attitudes of both men and women towards the use of violence in the home suggest that such a patriarchal pattern is still present in Kosovo, although

generalisations never capture the full image and not everyone adheres to such gender hierarchies (Farnsworth et al., 2015; Hasani, 2024). Kosovo's Women's Network conducted a survey in 2015 which found that 21% of the respondents find certain types of violence by a husband against his wife acceptable (Farnsworth et al., 2015; Hasani, 2024). Other studies reported even slightly higher percentages, with 29.9% of respondents noting that DV is sometimes a normal aspect of a relationship and 31.3% arguing that DV is a family matter so bystanders should not get involved or report it (Akgün et al., 2023; Kelmendi & Baumgartner, 2017). Acceptance of DV exists among both men and women, although women more often tend to justify domestic violence (Dobranja, 2020; Arënliu et al., 2021). A survey by the OSCE on the safety of women in Kosovo found that 51% of the respondents agreed that a man should assert his dominance over his partner, indicating that a large group of people hold on to patriarchal gender norms (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2019). The role of social norms thus shapes what is seen as acceptable social behaviour in Kosovo, these norms are deeply embedded in notions of patriarchal relations and influence the likelihood of domestic violence and the chance the victim will report it (Arënliu et al., 2021).

Patriarchal structures perpetuate challenges present in Kosovo, such as firearms-enabled GBV, unequal access to economic opportunities and unequal gender norms (Akgün et al., 2023; Browne, 2017). The historical roots of patriarchal relations can therefore be seen as a key barrier to change.
The characteristics and dominance of patriarchal relations are, however, not constant structures in Kosovo, but have shifted and changed over time (Kaser, 2021). After the Kosovo War a shift in ideology and economy, magnified by the influx and takeover of international institutions, took place (Kaser, 2021). With this, a "temporary retraditionalisation of gender relations and femininities and masculinities" took place as a result of a new, imposed neoconservative ideology centred around the free market (Kaser, 2021, p. 59). The previous socialist ideology of former Yugoslavia emphasised gender equality and questioned the gender relations prevalent before its emergence (Kaser, 2021). This official narrative, however, did not result in full gender equality and the discourse did not become embedded in the social fabric of society (Kaser, 2021). Next to the ideological discourse of gender equality, shifting gender roles also had an economic dimension, as the low-capital industries of former Yugoslavia demanded all citizens to be active in the workforce. The re-traditionalisation of gender norms implied that men were to become the sole financial providers of households, an expectation unattainable for many (Kaser, 2021).

The fluctuations of persistent patriarchal structures become clear through the feminist concept of continuums of violence and demonstrate the utility of feminist analysis in mapping complex issues such as GBV, small arms violence and their intersections.

A key factor in the representation and reinforcement of patriarchal norms is the media. While it can play an important role in awareness raising, in Kosovo the media has tended to hinder a person's privacy when they decide to report experiences of violence by publishing the event online (Arënliu et al., 2021; Avdimetaj, 2022). This results in a double experience of violence, both in the domestic setting and through discrimination from authorities and possible rejection by social surroundings (Hasani, 2024).

7.2.2.Legal Frameworks versus Implementation

Despite the observation of the concerning issues of SALW-related DV in chapter six and the relatively high tolerance of IPV among the Kosovo population, Kosovo has an extensive legal framework against gender discrimination and violence against women, conform to UN norms (Browne, 2017; Fetahu, 2015). Most protections were written into its constitution after the Declaration of Independence and the Istanbul Convention were incorporated in 2020 (Akgün et al., 2023). However, because of limited resources and embedded gendered social norms, these frameworks are far from being fully implemented (Kaser, 2021; Browne, 2017; Fetahu, 2015; Herbert, 2022; Akgün et al., 2023; Fruttero & Paolucci, 2024). Lengthy, bureaucratic processes increase the vulnerability of victims of GBV, despite the extensive legal framework to protect people against GBV (Avdimetaj, 2022; OSCE, 2007).

Moreover, the judiciary system in Kosovo has added to the legitimation of GBV, since wartime sexual violence was only recognised under the law on war victims in 2014 and few victims have applied for the reparations they are entitled to (Krasniqi et al., 2020). Moreover, the reparations to which they are entitled are less than other types of wartime violence which ranks suffering experienced during the war (Krasniqi et al., 2020). Through this discourse, the law creates an opposition between victims of sexual violence and other forms of war suffering, further embedding the stigmatisation of GBV (Krasniqi et al., 2020).

Impunity against GBV remains high, resulting in a large number of recidivist cases and increasingly escalating violence (Avdimetaj, 2022). The lack of a clear definition of domestic violence has

hindered progress in this regard (Fetahu, 2015). Furthermore, lenient sentences tend to be given even when the defendant is found guilty (OSCE, 2024). This indicates that deeply embedded patriarchal social norms are accepted over legal frameworks (Akgün et al., 2023). Addressing legal equality alone has not resulted in a tangible impact as GBV remains prevalent in Kosovo. The inclusion of structural inequality into a legal conceptualisation of DV is, therefore, imperative to capture the roots of DV. Scholars have demonstrated that by shifting the focus of legislation to the intersecting and complex roots of GBV, social gender norms are tackled which question the legitimacy of violence against specific groups (Hasani, 2024). Whether the current SALW control framework integrated the complexity of GBV, more specifically in its relation to small arms, will be discussed in the next chapter.

7.2.3.Militarised masculinities in the political system

Next, militarised masculinities were highlighted earlier as a key concept to understand norms and behavioural patterns of hegemonic masculinities and femininities (see eg. Féron & Väyrynen, 2024). However, Balbon (2024) notes a curious lack of attention to militarised masculinities in relation to gender inequalities of political participation. In Kosovo, political participation and leadership positions after the war were dominated by men involved in the military (KLA) (Balbon, 2024). This was a gendered leverage, as women with a military background did not enjoy the same electoral favour. Recently a turn has been witnessed, as a military history has become a negative characteristic, mainly related to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (Balbon, 2024). The social influence and evaluation of militarised masculinities in Kosovo have thus evolved in significant ways since the end of the Kosovo War (Balbon, 2024). However, this shift from valued to contested was not accompanied by an increase in gender equality. The patriarchal norms which influence, among others, domestic violence, and access to employment and education, have remained stubborn (Akgün et al., 2023; Browne, 2017). The political system remains built upon traits often affiliated with military masculinity, such as aggression and contests for power, which influence policy-making about, among others, small arms control and gender-based violence (Balbon, 2024). The political and social system built on norms relating protection and control to masculinity and care and obedience to femininity continues to be visible through the persistence of gendered SALW violence (Farr, et al., 2009). Furthermore, these binary divisions strongly increased their grip on Kosovar society after the war, discouraging women from participating politically and economically, which increased the average vulnerability of women's positions in the home and society at large (Balbon, 2024).

It is, however, necessary to be wary of accounts essentialising all military personnel as performers of militarised masculinities. The norms exerted through militarised masculinities are not enacted by all men but are embedded into the social and political structures of Kosovo society (Balbon, 2024). Furthermore, the role of militarised masculinities in the creation and reinforcement of male dominance in Kosovo is one factor which intertwines with the other societal factor described in this chapter.

7.3. Stigmatisation of gender-based violence and trust in institutions

Patriarchal norms also play a role in the next element: stigmatisation of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Kosovo. Stigma and silence around the subject of domestic violence are a persistent cultural norm (Maguire, 1998; Avdimetaj, 2022). In 1998 Maguire noted that the subject was very hidden and research on the topic was difficult (Maguire, 1998). Only a small segment of survivors of wartime sexual violence voiced their suffering (Hoxha & Andresen, 2021). The stigma around GBV has continued into peacetime and is not only linked to patriarchal norms but also to trust in institutions (Avdimetaj, 2022).

Talking about experiences of violence is rendered difficult by the reactions of the police when victims seek help (Avdimetaj, 2022). The normalisation of domestic violence by some police officers decreases trust in institutions and discourages people from reporting violence, especially without visible physical injuries. As a result of such insensitivity, violence is not prevented at its onset (Hasani, 2024; Avdimetaj, 2022). Coenders (2020) reports that interviews with young people in Kosovo pointed to the unresponsiveness and corruptibility of the police. The limited responsiveness of the police is seen in a lack of response when calling the emergency number or the late arrival of the police (Coenders, 2020). This does not provide a feeling of safety but rather increases the vulnerability of those in need of help (Coenders, 2020). Linked to this, is the stronghold of organised crime and the clientelism in the political system of the country. Criminal groups continue to exert power over politics, reinforcing a system in which corruption is pervasive (Herbert, 2022). Nepotism and corruption are not only widespread but are also often requisites to get a job or ensure acceptance into universities (Coenders, 2020). This lack of trust in security institutions is an explanatory factor for the widespread SALW ownership in Kosovo and may hinder the aims of voluntary surrender as will be noted in the next chapter (Squire et al., 2021).

Coenders' interviews with young people uncovered four categories of insecurities: economic, drug-related, education-related and psychical insecurities, which are all relevant factors connected to GBV with small arms (2020). Indeed, this chapter will explore the interconnections between unemployment, gender, drugs and arms proliferation in relation to the persistence of small arms violence. Campaigns by the police around topics such as drug abuse or domestic violence are not sufficient if impunity and unresponsiveness prevail in reality (Coenders, 2020). This is important to keep in mind since such awareness-raising campaigns compose a significant proportion of the actions taken under the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024).

Another factor which complicates feelings of insecurity in the region is the persistence of ethnic division both among communities and within the police corps (Herbert, 2022). Due to the legacy of the conflict, the existence of parallel state institutions and ongoing tensions, interethnic distrust has endured (Herbert, 2022). This continues to impact the sense of security and approachability of the police authorities for citizens of ethnicities different to the majority of the police corps in a specific area (Coenders, 2020).

7.4. Proliferation of organised crime and trafficking in illicit goods

A next factor which is imperative to create an understanding of how gender norms are reinforced on the one hand and to map the role of arms trafficking in Kosovo, on the other hand, is the presence of organised crime (OC) in Kosovo (Duquet & Goris, 2018; Herbert, 2022).

Both historical and geographical reasons make Kosovo, and the region of the Western Balkans as a whole, a transit country for illicit goods such as firearms and drugs but also trafficking of human beings (Herbert, 2022; Duquet & Goris, 2018). While arms trafficking mostly takes on an intra-regional character within the Western Balkans, when prices on markets outside of the region rise, a flow of small arms to Europe, but also North America and Western Asia is generated (UNODC, 2020). The Western Balkans remain a source of small arms which enter the EU (Satia, 2018; Esparza et al., 2021; Squires et al., 2021; Savona & Mancuso, 2017). What makes these weapons prone to entering illegal trafficking is the low control of stockpiles and ongoing corruption (Duquet & Goris, 2018). It is, however, imperative to note that non-EU countries, such as those of the Western Balkans, are not the only, or even primary source of weapons in the EU (Duquet & Goris, 2018).

Estimates from 2021 and 2023 indicate that arms trafficking from and through Kosovo remains above the European average and within the average of the region (The Global Initiative, 2024). In 2021, Kosovo scored slightly above the world, European and regional averages. A downward trend was observed in 2023, this score went under the world and regional average (The Global Initiative, 2024).

One of the recent historical roots of organised crime in Kosovo can be traced back to the collapse of pyramid schemes in Albania in 1997 (Pugh, 2014). Next to an influx of small arms, organised crime groups located in Albania became transnational in their operations (Pugh, 2014; Arsovska & Begum, 2013). These OC groups were engaged in multiple types of trafficking, from weapons to humans and drugs (Arsovska & Begum, 2013). These interlinkages between different types of crimes and illicit products remain today, with especially strong links between drug and weapon seizures (UNODC, 2020). Reducing arms proliferation is, therefore, directly connected to the combat against other criminal activities.

The Kosovo war was both politically embedded in history and contained a strong military and criminal component (Raufer, 2018; Pugh, 2014). Already during the war, allegations were widespread about the sources of funding for the Kosovo Liberation Army (Pugh, 2014). The KLA was linked to the Jashari clan, known for drug and child trafficking, which was the main actor in trafficking weapons from Albania in 1997 (Pugh, 2014). Next to this, the branch of the Kosovo mafia in Italy increased its activities in arms trafficking to Kosovo (Raufer, 2018). The war context and international sanctions unlocked new markets and incentives for trafficking, establishing a shadow economy (Pugh, 2014). Sanctions resulted in evasion strategies and benefited OC groups and politically corrupt individuals, resulting in an enticement to prolong the conflict (Pugh, 2014). After the Kosovo War in 1999, the extent of mafia networks in Kosovo came to light (Raufer, 2018). At the end of the 1990's the Kosovo Albanian mafia was reported to be "among the most dangerous drugs and arms traffickers" (Raufer, 2018, p. 64).

The KLA became not only a military organisation but also an economic structure which co-existed with the shadow Kosovar state during the war (Pugh, 2014). The combination of political and criminal activities of the KLA introduced a range of difficulties for the international actors involved in post-conflict reconstruction (Raufer, 2018). The extent of criminal groups and activities in Kosovo was silenced in the international discourse because all expectations of political rebuilding

were put on Hashim Thaci, a KLA leader (Raufer, 2018). This neglect of the criminal character of the Kosovo war has influenced the attention given to issues such as illegal trafficking and corruption which persist today (Pugh, 2014; Raufer, 2018).

Organised crime also perpetuates traditional gender roles and behavioural patterns. OC organisations in Kosovo are highly gendered organisations, with estimations of 4-7% female members (Arsovska & Begum, 2013; Herbert, 2022). The socially constructed gender roles, linking femininity to victimhood and masculinity to criminality are reinforced through the hierarchies of most OC organisations (Arsovska & Begum, 2013; Herbert, 2022). OC groups create a space in which violent hegemonic masculinity is legitimated, this is instrumentalised by some men to re-assert a dominant position in society (Herbert, 2022). Research on gender and gendered norms in organised crime is limited and relatively little attention has been given to women's roles within organised crime in Kosovo (Herbert, 2022). Organised crime, due to its secretive nature, and the role of powerful individuals is, however, a difficult context for research.

A characteristic of the patriarchal systems of Albanian organised crime groups is the historical influence of customary law, the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, which historically made up the rules of Albanian culture and households (UNODC, 2020; Arsovska & Begum, 2013). The Kanun does not have any legal force, but it has influenced what is traditionally seen as normal behaviour and still has an impact on attitudes towards gender performances which are linked to small arms ownership and use (Arsovska & Begum, 2013). It creates an environment positive for organised crimes due to the behaviour it legitimates. Next to this, it also sets up patriarchal gender roles such as, for example, the expectation of patrilineal families (Arsovska & Begum, 2013). Furthermore, it legitimates the violence of a man against his spouse if she disobeys him (Arsovska & Begum, 2013). Through the Kanun "gender-based subordination has been deeply embedded in the consciousness of men and women" (Arsovska & Begum, 2013; p. 105).

One reason for participation in organised crime or illegal activities during the war was linked to the economic control of the KLA and the Albanian shadow economy and political structures (Pugh, 2014). Economic factors remain a relevant argument for joining OC groups (Herbert, 2022). Organised crime serves two purposes in the context of job scarcity. First, shadow economies provide some form of economic security and social services due to the lack of job opportunities in Kosovo (Pugh, 2014). This in turn re-establishes the power of OC groups and reinforces the

destabilising effects of mafia networks such as political corruption and nepotism (Pugh, 2014). It is, however, imperative to distinguish between those who revert to OC as a survival mechanism from the elites within these organisations in the combat against OC (Pugh, 2014). Second, OC groups can be an alternative to keep up with the role of the hegemonic masculine role of provider in times of economic scarcity (Herbert, 2022). It can thus be argued that organised crime reinforces gender roles in Kosovo. However, social gender norms also shape the hegemonic performances of gender within organised crime, resulting in a reinforcing cycle of gender hierarchies (Herbert, 2022). The next section further explores the impact of economic factors on gender norms and barriers to reporting incidents of (SALW-involved) DV.

7.5. Impact of (un)employment and financial dependency

Economic factors, as alluded to above, play a role in the maintenance of gender roles in Kosovo. A strong gendered division of work and household tasks prevails in all countries of the Western Balkans (Herbert, 2022). While the Law on Gender Equality and Kosovo's constitution provide the legal base for equal access to opportunities and participation in the workforce, Kosovo has the highest unemployment rate among women in the region (Dobranja, 2022; Browne, 2017; Kaser, 2021; Akgün et al., 2023). However, the gap in younger age groups is diminishing and the participation of women in the labour force has overall been increasing over the past years (Dobranja, 2022). The participation of women shortly went up between 2018 and 2021, from 17% to 22%, this number, however, remains far lower than male participation (66% in 2021) (Dobranja, 2022). Female participation dropped under 20% again in 2022, which is the lowest female labour participation number in Europe and ranks in the five lowest female participation levels worldwide (Kapsoli & Mohona, 2025).

Furthermore, the law on Labour might add to the gap in labour participation (Dobranja, 2022). In regards to maternity leave it prescribes that women are allowed six months of leave, at 70% of their wages paid by the employer (Dobranja, 2022). Men, in contrast, are only allowed three to five days of paternity leave. This law makes it considerably more expensive for employers to hire women, reinforcing the prevailing gender norms burdening women with the majority of childcare and limiting their opportunities in the work field (Dobranja, 2022).

Men remain the main decision-makers in many households in Kosovo, attributing limited agency to women (Dobranja, 2022). Women are often expected to adhere to traditional gender norms of care in the household, a main reason for the low female participation in the workforce (UN Women,

2018; Arënliu et al, 2021; Kapsoli & Mohona, 2025). Because women are often not financially independent and have to rely on their husband's assets and income it is extremely difficult to escape domestic violence (Browne, 2017). The gendered norms regarding economic activity and their impact on women's economic self-sufficiency have been recognised in the *Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024* (Dobranja, 2022; Agency for Gender Equality, 2020).

Next to social gender norms and the impact of the Law on Labour, the existing wage gap might also be a demotivating factor for women to participate (Kapsoli & Mohona, 2025; Browne, 2017). Moreover, women are still often discriminated against in job interviews (Coenders 2020). Again, the legal framework against such discrimination exists but its implementation has been persistently weak (Dobranja, 2022; Kapsoli & Mohona, 2025).

Related to the financial dependency of many women in Kosovo is the lack of property ownership, which poses a significant barrier to security (Hasani, 2024). The literature highlights the role of social norms in the gendered ownership of assets and property; even if a woman is legally entitled to inherit property, it often goes to a man (Akgün et al., 2023; Browne, 2017).

Socio-economic inequality and dependency on a spouse or family members thus contribute to gendered hierarchies and women's relatively vulnerable positions (Dobranja, 2022; Hasani, 2024). Economic stability has also been reported to influence attitudes towards DV, with low-income groups indicating more support for intra-marital violence (Dobranja, 2020; Arënliu et al., 2021).

The influence of organised crime as a last resort of income has already been noted. Next to this, crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in which more time is spent at home showed increased levels of domestic violence, and concerningly decreased reporting in many contexts (Kourti et al., 2023; Limani & Limani, 2022; Dobranja, 2022; Hasani, 2024). The analysis of the AVMP supports this as the pandemic was speculated to be a leading cause of the increase in SALW-involved DV between 2019 and 2021 (see Figure 1, chapter 6). In Kosovo, economic stability, together with increased stress and limited physical space, were important causes of rising incidents of domestic violence (Hasani, 2024). Furthermore, the government strategies to combat this increase through the establishment of temporary shelters added constraints on women's opportunities for employment (Dobranja, 2022). In addition, other permanent support systems were shut down due to the loss of resources and staff (Hasani, 2024; KWN, 2023). Socio-economic inequalities and opportunities are thus important factors in understanding fluctuations in domestic violence and people's abilities to escape from it (Hasani, 2024).

7.6. Ethnic diversity; intersectional difficulties for smaller minorities

A factor which has thus far not been discussed is the diversity of ethnic groups who inhabit Kosovo (Sigona, 2012). Although intersectional research on GBV and ethnicity is limited, the existing literature demonstrates the exacerbated level of discrimination smaller minority groups experience, not only because of their ethnicity but also based on class, education and gender (Hasani, 2024; Milenković, 2018). This section will briefly outline some of the challenges faced by smaller minorities regarding poverty and GBV which impacts the vulnerable social, political and economic positions of these groups in Kosovo society. No literature on the specific experience of smaller minority groups with small arms could be found. This section only provides a limited overview of the unique positions of minorities in Kosovo, an extensive account of this topic unfortunately falls outside the scope of this study.

Kosovo is an ethnically diverse country which is, next to Albanians and Serbs, inhabited by multiple smaller minority groups: Roma, Egyptian, Ashkali, Turks, Bosnians, Croats and Gorani (Sigona, 2012). The first three communities have been grouped together in the label RAE, created by the OSCE and KFOS[17] (Sigona, 2012). The census of 2011 estimated that about 35.000 to 40.000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian persons live in Kosovo (Sigona, 2012; OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2020). It is important to note that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities all face different challenges and have varying strategies to deal with them, especially due to the different geographic locations of these groups (Sigona, 2012). Because most literature does not differentiate between the three communities or include other small minority groups, this section will mostly have to cover them together as well.

The RAE communities face severe economic, political and social challenges (Sigona, 2012). The statehood model centred around a multi-ethnic society since the independence in 2008 has not resulted in an improvement of living conditions for smaller minority groups (Sigona, 2012). High levels of unemployment combined with lower access to education and social discrimination result in dire living conditions (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2020). The exclusion from all aspects of society is gendered, with minority women particularly facing a disadvantaged position (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2020). The economic situation of the Romani community in terms of poverty and unemployment has remained especially severe (Sigona, 2012). The intersections between

[17] The NGO the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society is an organisation within the international network of philanthropic foundations located in Kosovo. For more information see https://kfos.org/en/about-us.

employment and domestic violence outlined above, have also been observed within the Roma community and attitudes legitimating violence in the domestic space remain significant in this group (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2020). The widespread social exclusion and poverty among Roma women combined with the lack of resources to seek help makes it even more difficult for victims in this community to escape a violent household (Milenković, 2018). Poverty makes it practically impossible for women to report violence as they have limited access to phones or transportation (Milenković, 2018). Lack of official documentation and intersectional discrimination by authorities, which result in low levels of trust in institutions, further increase the barriers to seeking help (Milenković, 2018). Next to this, social stigma based on patriarchal gender norms is also persistent in minority communities, especially among Romani groups (Milenković, 2018).
The literature demonstrates the need for an intersectional approach to grasp the challenges faced by different ethnic groups (Sigona, 2012; Milenković, 2018).

7.7. Post-conflict memorisation and nationalism

The second to last element included in this analysis of contextual factors reinforcing GBV, SALW proliferation and their intersections is the official narration of recent Kosovar history. The memorisation process of the Kosovo war has influenced gender roles, affirming men as heroic protectors and women as victims or nurturers (Balbon, 2024; Hoxha & Andresen, 2021; Herbert, 2022). The reality of female participation before the breakdown of the Republic of Yugoslavia and during the Kosovo War has been written out of the public discourse (Balbon, 2024; Hoxha & Andresen, 2021; Krasniqi et al., 2020). This gendered narrative of suffering shapes the gender roles and hierarchies within Kosovo society (Hoxha & Andresen, 2021). The stigmatisation of sexual violence silenced women after the war, Hoxha and Andresen note that “immense public pressure” was needed to kickstart the legal process against sexual violence and increase attention to the experiences of women in commemorations (2021, p. 270). An example of a project aiming to confront the persistent stigmatisation of victims of war-time sexual violence is the ‘Thinking of You’ art installation by Alketa Xhafa Mripa (Krasniqi et al., 2020; Hoxha & Andresen, 2021; Mripa, 2015). The project aimed to draw attention to the legacy of GBV during the conflict by visualising the impact of such violence (Krasniqi et al., 2020). About 5.000 dresses and skirts were hung up in a football stadium to achieve this message. Krasniqi et al. (2020) however, critique the reinforcing gendered imagery by using essentialist symbols of gender through the use of dresses. In their analysis of the project, they emphasise that it is successful in raising attention to sexual violence as a war crime but it does not shift attention to the victims themselves or the ongoing gender

hierarchies reinforced through “everyday nationalism” (Krasniqi et al., 2020, p. 462). This points to the persistence of gender norms and the reflex to filter victims out of conversations about GBV, partly contributing to the stigma around victimhood.

Narratives around the Kosovo war are shaped within the Kosovar nation-building project. The nationalist project is linked to felt insecurities and is underpinned by the same gender ideals which feminises the nation as a structure in need of male protection (Krasniqi et al., 2020; Bracewell, 2000). Such an analysis of nationalism shows how changes in gender roles at the level of the family pose a threat to the foundations of the nation-state. The discussion of nation-building stands in relation to the nationalist narratives of other states in the region, especially, tensely, with the Serbian national discourse (Bracewell, 2000). These competing discourses are shaped around an anxiety of endangered masculinity which in turn affects discourse on gender norms within the societies (Bracewell, 2000). A further discussion on nationalism and its regional dimensions would, however, lead us out of the scope of this thesis.

7.8. International interventionism

The last factor which has been identified as relevant to mapping the complexity of contextual factors and gender norms underpinning the gendered dimensions of SALW violence is the role of international actors in Kosovo. The country is a unique setting because its institutions, first developed informally, grew under extensive international monitoring and interventions since the establishment of UNMIK (UNMIK, n.d.; Gulyás, 2012; Carapic, 2014). These international peacebuilding and nation-building processes in Kosovo tended to essentialise the causes for inequalities to traits of the local culture, a process which as noted resulted in the creation of a stereotypical imagery of the region (Balbon, 2024). This process added to the (re-)enforcement of gender hierarchies, seen in the exclusion of women and other genders from peacebuilding and nation-building projects because international actors argued that their inclusion would go against ‘local traditions’ (Balbon, 2024; Farnsworth, 2008).

While the UN interim administration ensured that legal frameworks and reforms within security institutions were drawn up, it did not ensure the necessary local ownership to implement these frameworks (Coenders, 2020). This is to show that legal discourse and monetary aid do not lead to increased equality in the political or social system when the voices of many groups, except for a select few elites, are pushed aside (Coenders, 2020). An example of this is the police reforms, in

which UNMIK played a leading role, which did not result in increased trust in the authorities or change in the discrimination against experiences such as domestic violence (Coenders, 2020).

Related to organised crime and the trafficking of illicit goods, the international interference after the Kosovo War did not take into account the role of shadow economies in the conflict, or look at the best-fitting economic system post-conflict (Pugh, 2014). UNMIK imposed a market economy which as seen had an impact on the re-traditionalisation of gender norms and caused distress within families as men suddenly were expected to be the sole source of financial income (Kaser, 2021).

Currently, international standards remain influential in Kosovo's policymaking as it is a candidate state to join the EU, and therefore in the process of conforming its legislation to the acquis communautaire of the European Union (European External Action Service, 2024). Through this process, the values and norms promoted by the EU become important for Kosovar policy-making. Focus groups conducted by Hoxha and Andresen highlighted that "bottom-up attitudes and values collide with European policies and integration process" (2021, p. 272). Among the Kosovo population, there is support for increased EU participation, however, the neglect of confronting the past in the EU accession process is seen as a disadvantage (Hoxha & Andresen, 2021). The international pressure is visible in the current small arms control framework, as the aim of the Roadmaps emphasises the harmonisation of regional legislation with the EU (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). International pressure, therefore, remains active in Kosovo's decision-making

7.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined how contextual factors interact with and reinforce patriarchal gender norms, gender-based violence, small arms proliferation and their intersections.

The concept of continuums of violence helps to see the long-term persistence of gendered hierarchies in Kosovo, pointing at the urgency to account for the impact of long-term factors such as post-conflict nation-building, shadow economies stemming from before the war, patriarchal roots of gender norms and the long-term influence of international interventions over the past decades.

Next to this, intersectionality comes forth as a key lens to understand the complexity of gender hierarchies which influence both issues around GBV and SALW abuse. Economic stability, ethnicity and gender all impact a person's position and vulnerability within Kosovar society. The dominant hegemonic norms of masculinities and femininities in Kosovo leave many women in a

dependent position on a male partner or family member, posing an important barrier to a woman's ability to leave a violent situation. Studies on attitudes towards domestic violence furthermore conclude that a sizeable segment of people in Kosovo find violence against a partner acceptable in certain situations. The case study of Kosovo shows the impact of patriarchal norms on the vulnerability of certain groups, especially women, ethnic-, gender-, and sexual minorities and confirms the theory that roots vested in social norms impact the economic, political and social opportunities a person gets attributed (Hasani & Kroçi, 2024).

Moreover, the historical presence of organised crime and mafia in Kosovo reinforces both patriarchal gender relations and the flow of small arms on black markets.

Lastly, the experiences and participation of women during the Kosovo War have largely been written out of the state memory narratives. Intertwined with the nation-building project is the influence of international actors in Kosovo, especially through UNMIK. The ongoing process of international integration as an EU candidate is especially relevant as harmonisation with European legislation is central to the SALW Control Roadmaps.

Taken together, these findings underscore the need to address SALW violence through a gender-sensitive and intersectional lens. The following chapter will explore how these insights are incorporated into the current SAWL control framework of Kosovo.

8. Understanding Gender Provisions in Kosovo's Small Arms Control Programme

This last analytical chapter centres the third research question and investigates whether, and how, gendered dimensions of SALW abuse are represented in Kosovo's small arms control programmes, consisting of the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) and the corresponding action plans by the Kosovar government (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). First, the themes which arose inductively from the data will be discussed to understand how gender is discussed in the documents. Next, the progress reports will be addressed to reflect on the actions taken based on the indicated aims of the Roadmaps (2018; 2024). Lastly, the themes discussed in the literature above, outlining the complex contextual intersections with gendered small arms violence and GBV, will be deductively applied to the data.

Through reflexive TA, five themes were identified in the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) and action plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). The first theme collects all references to the gendered experiences of SALW proliferation and abuse, it is subdivided into the impact of SALW on men and women. The second category outlines the central targets and aims of the Roadmaps. It is separated into aims for structural change in social norms, on the one hand, and goals of increased equal gender participation, on the other hand. The next category gathers all segments discussing attitudes and feelings of (in)security towards small arms. The fourth theme gathers and discusses the various measures of action outlined in the data. Lastly, a short analysis can be made of references on the impact of SALW proliferation on broader social, political and economic structures. After presenting the actions taken during the first Roadmap recorded in the progress reports, the section of the last theme will lead into a discussion of the gendered impact of small arms through themes such as employment, continuums of violence, organised crime and trust in institutions, which, as discussed in chapter seven, interact with the complex phenomena of GBV and SALW proliferation.

8.1. Gendered impact and experiences of SALW possession, proliferation and misuse

8.1.1. Impact of SALW proliferation on men

The specific vulnerability of young men, as visible in the analysis of the AVMP, in relation to SALW misuse and possession is noted in both Roadmaps (2018; 2024). The documents shortly

discuss the disproportionate representation of men among small arms owners, perpetrators and victims. When it comes to suggested measures of action to target this gendered dimension, the Roadmaps are rather limited, pointing at the need to "increase awareness" about the dangers of firearms possession and engage men through "targeted programs" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 18; 2024, p. 23). The first action plan does refer to "the dominant forms of toxic masculinity that fuel the demand and misuse of firearms, particularly among young men", indicating that social norms are recognised to influence the likelihood of small arms possession and use (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 6). This link between masculinity and the disproportionate possession of firearms by men was not made in the current action plan (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024). Apart from this, the action plans do not directly address the unique impact of SALW on men but rather more vaguely point at the need to develop policies which "also address the needs of men, women, boys and girls", leaving what is exactly meant by these needs open (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 5; 2024, p. 27). The sparse references to the impact of small arms on men do not capture the overwhelming share of men as perpetrators and victims of most types of SALW violence in Kosovo recorded under the analysis of the AVMP (see eg. SEESAC, 2024e and Figure 8 on the perpetrators of SALW-related DV).

8.1.2. Violence disproportionately impacting women

Similar to the recognition of male experiences with small arms, the impact on women, especially as a victim of GBV involving small arms, is described in both SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024). They confirm that while harm by small arms is decreasing in many contexts, the numbers of SALW-involved GBV remain concerning. The analysis of the AVMP indeed observed an increase in the reported numbers of misuse of small arms in the context of DV, although as discussed this might not only be due to an increase in incidents. GBV and DV are discussed mainly in reference to, or in sections where, violence against women is discussed (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). The Roadmaps (2018; 2024) further point out the lack of institutional reaction and awareness of the widespread use of small arms in the domestic setting. The most recent Roadmap notes that "particular attention will be devoted towards advancing the response in addressing the misuse of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of GBV" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2024, p. 21). This suggests that the issue of SALW-involved GBV has remained urgent after the ending of the first Roadmap.

In response to the Roadmaps, the Kosovo Action Plans indicate the aim to organise awareness-raising activities on the sanctions of DV and GBV and improve the response to firearm misuse in domestic violence at the institutional level (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024).

8.2. Targets related to gendered SALW abuse

8.2.1. Structural change in norms and values

It has now been established that Kosovo's SALW control framework recognises the differentiated impact of small arms violence by gender. The next themes analyse how the frameworks plan to address these gendered dimensions, starting with specific targets of change in social norms and policy-making. Sections reflecting an aim to address underlying social norms are noted sparsely in all documents and can be divided into reflections on gender roles on the one hand and notions of gender equality, specifically in reference to the development of the frameworks, on the other hand.

The first Roadmap (2018) does not mention norms or values as important factors to address. It does point out a weakness of media reporting on the issue of SALW violence, namely that firearms misuse is mainly framed "as part of traditional values" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 18). Such reporting is expressed to be incoherent and insufficiently reflects the far-reaching negative consequences of small arms proliferation (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018).

The second Roadmap does reflect on the "links between masculine norms and firearms demand, use and misuse" and the lack of attention given to this (2024, p. 15). The critical section on media coverage was also included in this version of the framework.

When it comes to the action plans, the first action plan includes a reference to the impact of gender roles on the possession of small arms (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). The aim to prevent the impact of gender roles was not written into the second action plan (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024). Both action plans include a reference to the need to raise awareness around "specific behaviours", such as domestic violence and GBV (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 9; 2024, p. 36). The persistent gender hierarchies and roles present in Kosovar society, outlined in chapter seven, can be concluded to be very sparsely integrated into the SALW frameworks.

Next to this, references to gender equality do not point at the wider societal context but at the equal participation of men and women in the development of the Roadmaps (2018, 2024).

8.2.2. Targets of equal participation and gender mainstreaming

Related to gender equality, the goal of equal participation and representation of gender perspectives in measures of small arms control is a recurring theme throughout all documents (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Both Roadmaps include the goal to "fully integrate gender and age concerns in SALW/firearms control policies and ensure meaningful participation of women in SALW/firearms control", which indicates that this remains an ongoing process in the region (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 14; 2024, p. 15). Words such as 'participation' and 'representation' are used to refer to the participation of women in policymaking, pointing at the insufficient cooperation between arms control policymakers and women's organisations (eg. SALW Control Roadmap, 2024, p. 15).

References to 'inclusion' and 'integration' in the Roadmaps relate to the content of policies more specifically and a need to integrate "a comprehensive set of measures to address gender aspects of firearms demand, use and misuse" in SALW control (SALW Control Roadmap, 2024, p. 15). It is also reported that the practical implementation of such aspirations has remained too absent, which confirms the literature pointing at the lack of implementation of the extensive legal frameworks around gender equality and GBV.

The emphasis on the participation of women, women's organisations and gender experts in SALW control policy-making and its implementation has increased in the current action plan, noting that a balanced representation of women on the one hand and a gender perspective of SALW control is a work in progress (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024).

8.3. Attitudes towards gun violence

The next theme gathers references to attitudes and feelings towards small arms ownership and misuse. Feelings of security are used in the first Roadmap and the Kosovo action plans as a means to measure the outcome of actions (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Security, as outlined under the theoretical conceptualisation, is a highly individual sentiment determined by the intersectional characteristics of a person (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021; Gentry et al., 2019). A focus on human security is present in the first Roadmap (2018), which describes that the majority of people who feel safer when a small arm is present in the home are men. Self-protection is noted in both Roadmaps (2018; 2024) as a central reason for the purchase of a firearm, but this might be gendered as it has been established that most firearms are owned and purchased by men (Lebrun, 2019; Farr, 2002; Božanić, 2016) . To achieve a high percentage of people who feel safe from armed violence it is, therefore, necessary to take the

gendered attitudes towards SALW, and the gendered social norms from which they stem, into account.

Another aspect related to attitudes is trust in security institutions. As pointed out in the analysis above, trust in security institutions in Kosovo is low and results in limited reporting of GBV (Coenders, 2020; Avdimetaj, 2022). The Roadmap of 2018 confirms that trust in police needs to be increased to provide "adequate and equal safety for all" and to decrease the perceived need for a firearm for self-protection (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 18). This objective is also imperative in the collection of illegally owned firearms through voluntary surrender. For people to voluntarily surrender an illegal firearm they have to trust that the police will not prosecute and will ensure their protection in the future.
The statement "Increase public trust in security institutions" is included in both action plans but no further reflections or actions to achieve this are incorporated (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 8; 2024, p. 35).

Next to trust in institutions, a frequently repeated factor in the literature analysis, namely social attitudes towards small arms, is only referenced in the first Roadmap (2018) pointing at the social acceptance of illegal possession specifically. Regarding illegal possession, the action plans do not take into account its linkages to patriarchal gender norms. However, an increase can be observed in the extent to which illegal possession is targeted in the action plans. The current action plan contains more targets of awareness-raising, through cooperation with civil society, to increase knowledge of the risks of illicit small arms ownership among the general population (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024).

8.4. Measures of action

8.4.1. Concrete actions

Several suggested measures of action recur throughout the SALW Control Roadmaps (2018, 2024). The most cited measure, captured as a central objective under goal four, is increasing awareness and knowledge about the dangers of SALW possession and misuse. While young men form an especially important target group for such activities, it is expressed that awareness is not only low in this segment of the population (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). Knowledge of the impact and widespread use of SALW, especially in aggravating injuries in DV as noted in

chapter six, but also in a number of suicides and celebratory shootings, remains low among both the general population and policymakers, as comprehensive actions have remained limited and with little national ownership (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018). Next to this, a low level of awareness of the dangers of small arms proliferation and compliance with the legal restrictions are reported among licensed producers, traders and collectors of small arms (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024).

The media is noted as a possible partner to raise awareness, however, the current cooperation with the media is low and reporting on small arms often does not adequately capture the seriousness of the dangers they pose, a recurring remark from the literature discussed in chapter seven (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Arënliu et al., 2021; Avdimetaj, 2022).

The most recent Roadmap includes a short reflection on the "limited awareness of the needed support for victims of armed violence", it is indeed an issue described in the literature that shelters remain limited and the threshold to ask for help high (SALW Control Roadmap, 2024, p. 23; KWN, 2023). The media is again described as a possible partner to increase knowledge of social resources.

References to civil society mainly point out the lack of engagement between political institutions and civil society actors in the development of SALW control policies (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). The policymaking processes remain too exclusive and knowledge of specialised organisations is not instrumentalised in the development or execution of policies, resulting in critical gaps in the measures taken by government institutions (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). The attention to civil society as an important partner of cooperation has increased in the ongoing Roadmap (2024).

The centrality of awareness campaigns returns in the Kosovo Action Plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Both the need to organise knowledge campaigns among specific target groups such as youth, specific events such as celebrations and crimes such as domestic violence are included in the action plans. The aspired creation of formal communication channels between the media and government institutions for communications are expressed in both action plans in relation to adequate media reporting on the risks of small arms (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024).

Civil society, such as women's organisations, are also brought up as possible partners. It is noted that awareness among civil society still needs to be increased, however, some organisations are reported to have valuable knowledge on the gendered risks of SALW which are noted as important resources to use in the development of actions (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024). Regarding the gendered dimensions of small arms violence both action plans report the necessity of "inclusion and consultation with representatives of women's organizations, gender equality bodies and gender experts in the development and implementation of SALW/firearms control policies" (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 5; 2024, p. 27). This is an important recognition but also confirms that, beyond SEESAC, cooperation with gender experts to inform SALW control policies has remained limited.

Increased awareness among all sections of society; civilians, institutions, producers, etc., is one of the most important outcomes noted throughout the SALW control frameworks. However, Chapter Seven pointed out the frustration with awareness campaigns by the police when the reaction of the authorities remains slow and often does not take reports, especially of gendered violence, seriously (Coenders, 2020). This suggests that knowledge creation might not be sufficient if impunity prevails.

Next to awareness-raising campaigns, training is the most recurrent type of action in the Kosovo Action Plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Specific training "on gender aspects of SALW/firearms [for] members of the SALW commission and all other institutions tasked with implementing SALW/firearms control policies" and " training on gender statistics and gender-sensitive data collection" are included in the first action plan, the latter objective remains present in the current action plan (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017, p. 5; p. 3; 2024, p. 23). The current action plan also includes a goal of training media departments of security institutions to improve communication on the dangers of small arms through social media to reach the wider population (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024).

Lastly, the most recent action plan includes a few measures specifically targeting youth by organising lectures and "extracurricular materials in the educational system, impacting on reducing violence among young people in the education system" (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024, p. 36).

8.4.2. Methods of intersectional data collection

Next, to ensure gender-responsive arms control policies and make the measures of actions described above possible, intersectional data collection is reported as a key practice (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). Both Roadmaps express that "a Regional SALW Survey implemented in 2018 identified that the data collection practices in the institutions are inconsistent, unstandardized and the necessary level of detail is often unavailable, particularly when it comes to segregation by gender and age" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 12; 2024, p. 14). This supports the theory discussed in chapter four which stated that data on small arms violence and GBV is often siloed, incomparable across institutions or not aggregated by gender, age, etc. (LeBrun, 2019; Gentry, et al., 2019). It also indicates that the AVMP probably reports an underestimation of SALW incidents as it is built upon media and police reporting. To grasp the outcome of measures related to the Roadmaps it has already been noted that feelings of safety, disaggregated by gender and age are urged to be reported (SALW Control Roadmaps, 2018; 2024). The goal of intersectional data collection is limited in all documents to gender and age which, while important factors, omit other characteristics such as ethnicity and class from policymaking. The theoretical conceptualisation of security and the analysis of the literature above, however, suggest that these are important factors in the complex ties between GBV and SALW abuse (Sigona, 2012; Milenković, 2018; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021).

Furthermore, disaggregating the data of the AVMP by age was not possible under chapter six, since few case descriptions report estimated age groups of victims or perpetrators.

Gender-sensitive data collection, and training on how to mainstream this practice, are noted in both action plans (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). In order to achieve this a generalised methodology across all institutions is reported as a goal. Disaggregating data collection according to gender is an important recurring objective in the action plans to understand the issues and needs of the population (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024).

8.5. Relation of gun proliferation to societal structures

Lastly, the impact of small arms on the social, economic, political and environmental fabric of Kosovo society is, mostly indirectly, referenced throughout the Roadmaps (2018, 2024). The aims of SALW control and a significant decrease in the number of firearms in the country is reported as an opportunity to "reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of uncontrolled SALW/firearms proliferation and possession" (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018, p. 19;

2024, p. 21). The frameworks also point out the necessity to respond to new challenges related to small arms in the social sphere and through novel technologies. What specific changes are meant by this remains vague.

The current action plan similarly points out the contribution of preventing SALW proliferation and misuse to "the creation of a better and safer environment and overall social, economic, educational, health and similar development", which recognises the wider impact of widespread small arms presence (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024, p. 4). Effective SALW control measures are expressed as imperative in the current action plan both because "the direct and indirect effects of this phenomenon are highly damaging to society, families and the state" and because "the ineffective fight against this phenomenon has a negative impact on public, state, regional and wider security risks" (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2024, p. 4). This reflects a recognition of the widespread impact, directly but also indirectly, of small arms on society. This connects to the various factors discussed earlier which interact with and shape the persistence of gendered violence, small arms ownership and misuse in Kosovo. The majority of these factors did not arise from the documents through reflexive TA and will be discussed in light of the SALW control frameworks later on.

8.6. Actions taken during the first SALW Control Roadmap

Monitoring of the practical execution of the SALW Control Roadmaps is conducted by SEESAC. The progress reports, published to summarise the actions taken by each government, include a specific question on the 'awareness raising activities' held about firearm-enabled GBV or domestic violence, as well as a question monitoring the activities planned to raise awareness among the general public, specifically inquiring about plans targeting young men (SEESAC, 2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b; 2022a; 2022b; 2023a; 2023b; 2024a). The centrality of awareness-raising as a central measure of action is clear in the formulation of these questions.

In 2018, no activities were conducted to raise awareness among youth nor to increase knowledge around the risks of small arms-related GBV and DV in Kosovo (SEESAC, 2018). The first year of the SALW Control Roadmap thus knew a slow start to activities around the gendered dimensions of SALW. Despite this; no challenges were identified by the Kosovar Governmental institutions.

More activities were organised in 2019, lectures were organised at high schools on the general dangers of small arms (SEESAC, 2019a). Next to this, round tables were organised also targeting youth in participation with civil society organisations but also religious representatives and members of the security forums (SEESAC, 2019a). One project, organised in cooperation with the

PROGRAEK organisation (Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo), specifically targeted DV and GBV in the RAE communities (SEESAC, 2019a). Lastly, lectures on protection measures for victims of DV were organised at the political level and an exhibition was organised which outlined how violence could be reported to the police and which responsibilities the police hold in handling incidents of DV (SEESAC, 2019b). This last project confirms that civilians in Kosovo have little knowledge of their rights and the services they can turn to. It also suggests that the duties of the police are not always clear or well-known.

Between January 2020 and December 2022, no activities targeting GBV and DV in the context of SALW abuse were organised. In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic is reported as a major impact on the organisation of different projects, due to the reduction of staff in this period (SEESAC, 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b). In November 2022 two projects were launched in cooperation with North Macedonia aimed at increasing awareness of small arms misuse among youth in two border villages, with the participation of local political and police representatives (SEESAC, 2022b). In 2023 similar projects at high schools were organised to discuss and prevent small arms misuse (SEESAC, 2023a). Activities specifically addressing gendered small arms violence started again in 2023, although the specific actions are only vaguely described as "trainings, visits, practices of electronic reporting, as well as by linking the databases of relevant institutions" within the police corps (SEESAC, 2023a, p. 169).

During the first half of 2024, more concrete projects were reported (SEESAC, 2024a). One project, focusing on young people, specifically included multiple ethnicities, Albanian, Serbian and Roma, and focused on the general danger of firearms (SEESAC, 2024a). This indicates awareness of the role of ethnicity in Kosovo society and shows how this can be integrated into SALW control programmes. Regarding firearms-related DV, the police gave lectures in 141 schools throughout the country and official representatives followed trainings to increase the communication about GBV involving small arms to the general population and better grasp the intricacies of the relation between firearms and GBV (SEESAC, 2024a).

Despite the long pause in measures targeting GBV involving firearms, some important observations can be made. Firstly, many of the projects specifically address young people in Kosovo through the education system. Most activities remain in the realm of awareness-raising and lectures. With regards to GBV specifically, activities were mostly organised to train and increase knowledge of the dangers of small arms among official institutions to make outreach to the public possible. Civil society was only once mentioned as a key partner and the media remained completely absent as a

partner during the period of the first Roadmap, even though both were recurrent in the Roadmaps and action plans (SALW Control Roadmaps, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024).

8.7. Beyond the current framework: contextual factors in relation to small arms control

The gendered dimensions of SALW misuse are recognised in the Roadmaps and corresponding action plans (SALW Control Roadmaps, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). The themes which arose from the data demonstrate the strategies taken to incorporate gender-responsive arms control. Overall it can be stated that these frameworks are progressive in their attention to gender, both in relation to the disproportionate representation of men among SALW owners and perpetrators and the vulnerability of women, especially in the home, to experience SALW abuse.

In the analysis of firearms-involved DV in Kosovo (see Chapter 6) specific characteristics based on gender were found, both IPV and violence in the nuclear family were recurrent in the AVMP, but a highly gendered pattern was found in the likelihood of a person to experience one or the other. While the current SALW control frameworks do emphasise the issue of SALW-related DV, they do not take into account the specific gendered characteristics of this type of SALW violence.

The literature exploring the different intersections between GBV, SALW and different societal factors present in Kosovo can further add to the current approach and enrich the goal of gender-responsive arms control. From the feminist theoretical underpinnings and the analysis mapping literature on different intersecting factors of gendered SALW violence arise as significant explanations of ongoing struggles with gendered SALW violence. In relation to gendered possession of weapons, social norms, which create and reinforce hegemonic masculinities, are briefly touched upon in the Roadmaps (2018; 2024). However, the role of patriarchal norms in relation to stigmatisation, underreporting and the dependent position of many women within Kosovo are not highlighted in the Roadmaps or Kosovo action plans (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). The SALW control framework does not tackle the long-lasting impact of GBV involving small arms and no references are made to the possible shifts in character of such violence or the legacy of wartime violence, since the Kosovo war. The literature, however, showed the persistent stigma around and underreporting of wartime GBV, gendered legal response to war crimes in the aftermath of the conflict and neglect of experiences of wartime gender-based and sexual violence in state memorisation narratives (Hoxha

& Andresen, 2021; Balbon, 2024). Discourse on the legacy of conflict in the ongoing nation-building project was briefly noted in chapter seven as an important underlying factor of gendered norms. Furthermore, the current frameworks do not take into account existing tolerant attitudes towards DV and small arms ownership (see eg. Arënliu et al., 2021).

Chapter seven has shown that (SALW-involved) GBV or DV is not a recent nor standalone phenomenon separate from other societal structures. In relation to this, organised crime and grey economy have been highlighted as important factors in the reconfirming of patriarchal gender roles, legitimating male dominance and violence, and the persistent proliferation of small arms in the region (see eg. Herbert, 2022). The current SALW control framework does not take these illicit sources of small arms and the impact of organised crime on corruption and gender norms into account. The flow of small arms through illicit channels is intertwined with other criminal activities, these interlinkages are not mentioned in the framework to decrease small arms ownership and proliferation (Arsovska & Begum, 2013; UNODC, 2020). Organised crime is also reported as a last resort for some people due to persistent unemployment, which brings us to the role of employment and financial stability in the likelihood of DV. As shown, unemployment rates in Kosovo are high and the rate of female participation is the lowest in Europe, this leads to high financial dependence of many women on male family members or a spouse (Browne, 2017; Dobranja, 2022). High unemployment rates, moreover, make it harder for men to comply with the hegemonic male role of provider which is observed to result in higher numbers of domestic violence (Dobranja, 2022; Hasani, 2024). The link between social norms, employment, SALW possession and DV is therefore imperative to understand why violence in the home involving firearms takes place. These factors are, however, absent in all the analysed data on small arms control efforts in Kosovo.

Two aspects, discussed in the literature analysis, which do recur in the Roadmaps, action plans and/ or progress reports are trust in institutions and the experiences of minorities. Trust in the police is expressed as a source of felt insecurities in the literature and is indeed included as an aim of the SALW control framework to achieve an increase in reporting of violence (Coenders, 2020; Avdimetaj, 2022; SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024). To achieve this, the article by Coenders (2020) emphasised the need for more reliable police responses in the country and change in the negative impact of police attitudes towards victims of domestic violence. The question remains whether the emphasis on awareness raising as an outcome in both the Roadmaps and action plans will achieve this.

Lastly, the role of ethnicity is not expressed in either the Roadmaps or action plans but does recur in the actions reported in the progress reports which suggests that its relevance and importance are

recognised in some ways. As described, smaller minorities especially face high vulnerabilities socially, economically and politically in Kosovo. Minority women face high barriers to social services due to social stigma and norms but also due to financial and geographic reasons (Milenković, 2018). The aim for intersectional data collection in the SALW control framework does not include ethnicity which means the intersectional experiences of these groups will remain mostly unknown to policymakers, making targeted policies to combat SALW-involved GBV in these communities difficult.

8.8. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the efforts of the current and former small arms control frameworks in Kosovo to include a gender-sensitive approach (SALW Control Roadmap, 2018; 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017; 2024). It investigated how gendered dimensions of small arms violence are represented in the frameworks and what silences remain present within it. It can be concluded that gender perspectives are included but reflections on the contextual factors which both create and reinforce the relation between gender and SALW remains largely absent. Small arms issues are discussed largely as a standalone problem, while a feminist intersectional approach in chapter seven has demonstrated the range of societal factors which intersect and underpin them. The widespread unemployment, especially among women and the impact of organised crime and shadow economies on SALW proliferation and legitimation of violence, are notably absent from the framework. The intersectional experiences of smaller ethnic minorities are also missing from the Roadmaps and action plans, although two actions reported in the progress reports did integrate multiple ethic groups. Furthermore, ethnicity is not included in the AVMP, making it hard to get a thorough understanding of the issue in this community, hereby making targeted action difficult. In relation to continuums of violence since the Kosovo war, the current SALW control framework does not discuss the continued legacy of wartime sexual violence nor the impact of the war on current SALW proliferation and misuse. Concepts such as intersectionality and continuums of violence, adopted from feminist peace research and critical security studies highlight the limited attention to broader societal factors in which gendered SALW issues are embedded.

Next, although noted in the Roadmap, cooperation with relevant civil society and media actors were not regularly reported in the progress reports, indicating that progress in this area can still be made as the literature pointed at the role NGO’s have played in advocacy for disarmament and against gender-based violence in the past and their relevant knowledge which could attribute to enhanced sensitivity to gender in arms control.

Lastly, it is important to interrogate how gender is included on the one hand and which solutions for the gendered dimensions of SALW violence are proposed. Especially the latter remains largely focused on awareness raising and equal participation, only indirectly linking small arms issues to social, economic and political structures. This is confirmed in the action plans which indeed demonstrated a focus on awareness campaigns, largely in targeting youth in schools and trainings of specialised personnel. It has to be reiterated that the SALW Control Roadmaps are progressive in their approach to small arms control, as no other frameworks attempting to include a systematic gender and intersectional approach were found.

The next concluding chapter will further outline how the analysis of the AVMP and a feminist approach to small arms control can inform and enrich gender-responsive small arms control in Kosovo.

9. Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Further Research

This study aimed to map the complex intersections between gender and small arms issues in Kosovo and demonstrate how this relation is created, recreated and legitimised through its intersections with other societal factors. It explored how the current SALW control framework, and Kosovo's action plans to implement the targets outlined in it, make space for the intersectional impact of SALW issues based on gender. The theoretical conceptualisations based on feminist peace research and critical security studies, accompanied by the feminist methodology used throughout the analysis, guided the research to explore the relationship between gender and small arms and demonstrated the value of intersectional thinking for gender-responsive arms control. This concluding chapter will briefly examine the findings of the research, open further discussion on small arms control and argue for continued research on small arms proliferation and misuse, its differentiated impact on different people and the societal structures which underpin and reinforce it.

To answer the main research question, the study was divided into three sub-research questions. This last chapter returns to the overarching objective of the thesis: to understand how gender intersects with small arms issues, while recognising the role of societal factors to re-contextualise the small arms control framework in Kosovo. Both the existing research on small arms issues, as well as the analysis of the AVMP, demonstrated the variety of different gendered dimensions to small arms ownership, misuse and victimhood. The gendered patterns uncovered through the analysis of the AVMP demonstrate the limitation of a one-size-fits-all approach to arms control and the need for gender-sensitive small arms control to account for differences in experiences with and attitudes towards small arms. In addition to these findings, this thesis explored the connections of small arms violence, mainly focusing on GBV involving firearms, to various contextual structures. By bringing together literature on eight different contextual elements, it demonstrated the complex connections with small arms violence. It demonstrated that the gender hierarchies and norms which underpin the gendered nature of small arms violence are both temporally and structurally embedded in Kosovo society. It is therefore necessary not only to analyse the visible repercussions of widespread SALW proliferation, but also to investigate the norms and structures through which this violence is legitimated and recreated. The first two research questions established that: small arms violence in Kosovo (1) has highly gendered dimensions and (2) these gendered characteristics are structurally embedded and reinforced through other contextual factors. These findings were applied to the last part of the research objective; the active political process present to counter small arms proliferation and misuse in Kosovo. Overall, it can be concluded that the intersectional impact of small arms

proliferation and misuse is partly recognised in Kosovo's SALW control framework. Both the Regional SALW Control Roadmaps (2018; 2024) and Kosovo's National Action Plans recognise the gendered experiences of SALW ownership and misuse. The targets and activities thus far mainly aim to give relevant officials the tools to practice gender-responsive SALW control and inform the public of the gendered dangers of small arms. The SALW control programme remains limited when it comes to the connections between small arms violence and different societal structures such as unemployment, legacies and narrations of wartime violence, organised crime, (dis)trust in institutions or the intersectional impact on different ethnic groups. However, before the adoption of the first SALW Control Roadmap, a systematic gender focus and discussion on the gendered implications of small arms had long been absent in Kosovo. It can therefore be said that the efforts of the SALW Control Roadmaps are progressive in their aims to target the gendered dimensions of small arms. Since the activities related to the first Roadmap were distorted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains an open question whether the gender provisions in the Roadmaps will result in increased targeted actions in the future.

In conclusion, the gender dimensions of small arms violence are present in Kosovo and are connected to contextual factors. Political processes against SALW misuse are active and recognise the gendered-dimensions small arms violence but are limited in their recognition of the issue within other societal structures, treating SALW misuse largely as a standalone problem. The case of Kosovo demonstrates the relevance of gender-sensitivity in small arms programmes to holistically target all experiences with SALW violence. Next to this, it reflects the extent of the dangers small arms pose in a relatively stable society, showing the urgency of exploring sources of violence in these peaceful contexts. The current approach to gender-responsive small arms control in Kosovo opens up discussion on the epistemological depiction of small arms issues and the meaning of gender-sensitive processes.

In this regard, the analysis of the current small arms programme in Kosovo showed that it perceives small arms as a threat to the safety of its population. It portrays the gendered dimensions of small arms misuse mainly in the differentiations in ownership and experience of SALW violence between men and women. The actions coupled to combat said gendered experiences of violence focus on awareness-raising among the general population and personnel of security institutions, and gender mainstreaming in SALW control policy making.

Next to the epistemological approach to small arms control in Kosovo, this thesis looked into an alternative perspective to approach SALW issues through a feminist lens. The analysis through the epistemological perspective of feminist peace research and critical security studies highlighted how social, political and economic structures are intertwined and result in complex social phenomena such as gendered small arms violence. The epistemological lens of feminist peace challenges how knowledge of small arms issues is developed and approached, it suggests that the presence of small arms has to be seen as intertwined with several other issues, such as, for example, unemployment and gender inequalities, and is embedded in the social fabric of society, which becomes tangible in the differentiated impact of SALW proliferation and misuse based on human characteristics such as gender. This perspective challenges traditional research and approaches to small arms because it suggests that 'quick fixes' are not available, rather small arms issues have to be analysed within their wider context. This implies that the way we frame and understand issues of small arms and their impact on society will influence the policies shaped to combat them.

It is important to reiterate that the inclusion of gender-sensitivity in official small arms programmes, such as observed in the SALW Control Roadmaps active in the Western Balkans, continues to be rare and debate around the inclusion of 'soft' characteristics, such as gender, into 'hard' security policies remains challenging. This thesis aimed to open up the discussion on how issues of SALW violence, and especially its gendered dimensions, are approached. It contributes to previous research on the gendered dimensions of small arms production, ownership and use and aims to enhance our understanding of small arms issues in peaceful societies by demonstrating the value of a gendered analysis of these issues. This study complements the research developed over the past two decades, which demonstrated the intricate intersections between small arms and societal, personal and normative factors. It has demonstrated the widespread gendered impact within the context of Kosovo and urges to continue this conversation on the intersectional dimensions of SALW in peaceful societies in future research. Especially the impact of small arms on LGBTQIA+ people and contexts which are currently not engaged in large SALW control efforts would be interesting for future research. Estimates by Small Arms Survey (2017), for example, point out the vast differences in SALW proliferation across European states and research on the topic of small arms in the EU has shown that small arms trafficking in the EU mostly has an intra-regional character (Duquet, 2022). Despite this, SALW control frameworks and research on the context of the EU have remained limited, and is therefore an important gap in the academic canon.

Data on the impact of small arms violence on the LGBTQIA+ community was completely absent both in the literature on SALW issues, as well as in the current approach to SALW control in Kosovo. This group, therefore, remains invisible in research such as this one, making it an urgent topic for continued research.

In light of the absence of representations of gender and sexual minorities, the feminist methodology and theoretical foundation of this thesis aimed to recognise the process of silencing within the process of writing this thesis. It is pertinent to repeat that the factors interacting with gendered small arms discussed in this thesis in no way form an exhaustive list, and aspects such as age, urban/rural divides, international and diaspora influence or religion have not been explored at large in this thesis. This study aimed to continue the academic conversation on the global issue of small arms proliferation and violence and, therefore encourages continued research on this topic. Characteristics such as minorities and class/employment are only briefly touched upon in this thesis and require further investigation to understand their impact on experiences of SALW violence.

Next to this, it is relevant to reiterate the outsider position of the researcher in the context of the case. Because of this, and the limited scope of this study, this thesis was not able to capture the lived experiences of gendered small arms violence in Kosovo and the impact of the ongoing control frameworks.

While this thesis was able to establish some of the gender dimensions of SALW violence at large, its scope remained mainly on the gender dimensions of SALW-related gender-based violence and domestic violence, both due to limitations in data (in RQ2) and time restrictions (in RQ1). Both the theory, reports on the AVMP and to some extent the Roadmaps, highlight the disproportionate impact of SALW violence on men in other settings, such as public disputes or criminal contexts. These types of SALW violence would be interesting to analyse from a gender perspective and intersectional approach in future research.

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