

Revisiting Protection from Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Actors, Victims, and Power.
In: Gizelis, Theodora-Ismene and Louise Olsson (eds) 2015: *A Systematic Understanding of Gender, Peace and Security: Implementing UNSCR 1325*. Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution Series, pp. 99-115.

Revisiting Protection from Conflict-related Sexual Violence: Actors, Victims and Power

Jana Krause (King's College London)

Abstract

Conflict-related sexual violence has attracted unprecedented research and policy attention. With the adoption of six UN Security Council resolutions and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, a global framework of protection has emerged. Yet, criticism arose as to what the dominant discourse on 'rape as a weapon of war' and a victim-focused perspective might entail for forwarding women's participation in the work of peace and security – the latter being the primary reason for the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in the first place. This chapter discusses synergies between feminist and empirical research findings and implications for prevention.

Introduction

Sexual violence in conflict has received unprecedented research and policy attention in recent years. By now, it is beginning to be acknowledged as a problem of international security and development, at least rhetorically. Our knowledge of how we should better understand this problem has also increased. Since the mass rapes in Bosnia's civil war and Rwanda's genocide captured international attention, feminist activists, human rights organizations and social science scholars have dedicated

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enormous efforts to studying the phenomenon in order to inform prevention policies. In all, the collected activism has been able to generate a stronger sense of moral responsibility to protect women and girls from sexual violence, including changing the international legal landscape. The International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993) and Rwanda (ICTR, 1994) established recognition of sexual violence in armed conflict as a war crime and a crime against humanity (Chun and Skjelsbæk 2010). UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 expressed the international community's unequivocal recognition of sexual violence in conflict as a threat to peace and security. UNSCR 1325's two main pillars are women and girls' protection and women's participation in all stages of peace processes. As a subtheme of protection, sexual violence in war has then emerged as a narrow focus area, attracting significantly more policy attention than women's participation. Driven by actors such as the UK and USA, a global framework for preventing conflict-related sexual violence has emerged. This framework is based on six UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR 1325; UNSCR 1820; UNSCR 1888; UNSCR 1889; UNSCR 1960; UNSCR 2106) adopted between 2000 and 2013, and the UK-led Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted in 2013, which more than 140 states have signed to date. This declaration pledges to ensure that sexual violence prevention and assistance and response efforts are prioritized and adequately funded, and emphasizes the promotion of women's full participation in all political, governance and security structures and peace processes.¹

The UN Security Council Resolutions have reiterated that women's participation in

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all stages of peace processes is mandatory not only for preventing sexual violence during and after war but also for building durable peace. Yet, a continuous critique is that the actual international policy discourse still tends to reinforce a too narrow focus on women as victims, reducing women's roles to static rather than active. A narrow protection discourse persists even though the UN Security Council renewed its commitment to increasing women's participation in peace processes with UNSCR 2122 adopted in 2013. Another critique is that sexual violence in conflict is often labelled as a general 'strategy' and 'tactic' in war. The prominent 'rape as a weapon of war' discourse has been widely criticized by scholars because it ignores the complexity of the phenomenon, implying that the problem can be solved primarily with increased prosecution and punishment based on the logic of deterrence (USIP 2014).

Research instead suggests the urgent need for a more nuanced understanding of these complex problems. There is increasing recognition among scholars that both women and men can be potential victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. Furthermore, most researchers agree that patriarchy is linked to sexual violence in conflict (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013: 12) although feminist and conflict researchers disagree on the causal versus constitutive nature of this relation and offer very different explanations for such atrocities. This academic debate reflects to some extent the multi-causality of the phenomenon, which has often remained under-acknowledged due to extensive analysis of cases with extremely high levels of sexual violence, such as Bosnia, Rwanda, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

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Feminist and empirical research are further divided by different methodologies and approaches that focus on different levels of analysis. One major contribution of feminist research has been raising attention to the continuum of violence against women during war and in the post-conflict period. These findings demonstrate that sexual violence does not end with peace agreements, and that its root causes are not limited to war dynamics and strategies (Cockburn 2004; Enloe 2005; Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn 2011). Empirical research has greatly advanced global data collection on sexual violence in conflict, which shows that rape is not statistically associated with gender inequality on a global scale (Cohen 2013b). It has further shown that low levels of sexual violence against civilians have been reported for many conflicts and armed groups (Wood 2006; Cohen 2013b; Cohen and Nordås 2014). Empirical research therefore informs us that sexual violence in conflict is not inevitable (Wood 2006).

This chapter reviews feminist and empirical research to further our understanding of this complex phenomenon. It revolves around two common forms of critique against the current discourse, the first about women being relegated to the role of victims and the second about rape as a strategy of war. We begin by looking closer at the existing global framework and current themes and trends in sexual violence in conflict. Thereafter, the chapter identifies and discusses existing causes and motives for sexual violence in conflict that both feminist and empirical research have brought forward. As will be noted, there is considerable overlap between social constructivist feminist research and the empirical study of sexual violence. Neither patriarchal

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norms nor individual opportunity or sexual desire sufficiently explain the documented global variation, but the devaluation of femininity remains constitutive for sexual violence against both women and men (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013). In the final section, the chapter connects the policy framework to research in order to discuss implications for more effective prevention policies based on research findings.

The chapter concludes by arguing that women's and men's protection from sexual violence requires a complementary focus on women's participation. Strengthening gender equality is not only essential from a human rights perspective. Changing gendered power relations might weaken the basis for rape to make sense to individual perpetrators (Skjelsbæk 2012: 163), both during war and in peacetime. A too narrow focus on wartime rape as a deliberate 'strategy' and the exclusion of men as victims of sexual violence is counterproductive because it undermines both women's and men's protection. Instead, the chapter shows that protection efforts need to be based on a context-sensitive analysis of women's and men's differential vulnerabilities, and on understanding of the social dynamics within armed groups for prevention policies to change armed groups' interaction with civilians.

The Global Framework on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

The global framework on conflict-related sexual violence emerged in the context of feminist and human rights activism, which highlighted the grave consequences of sexual violence for victims, including trauma, stigma, unwanted children, and health

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risks. Its significant negative impact on the fabric of local communities has more recently been acknowledged as a threat to the durability of peace agreements and post-conflict development. Only with the adoption of five UN Security Council Resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence since 2008 did policy efforts on protection gain momentum. In the following, we examine the understanding of protection from conflict-related sexual violence as developed within the resolutions in relation to women's participation in peace processes.

In 2000, UNSCR 1325 called for "special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict" (UNSCR 1325). UNSCR 1325 emphasized "the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls" (UNSCR 1325). Eight years later, UNSCR 1820 was adopted in the context of reports of massive sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The text noted that "women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group" (UNSCR 1820). The resolution further acknowledged that "sexual violence perpetrated in this manner may in some instances persist after the cessation of hostilities" (UNSCR 1820). UNSCR 1820 requested the Secretary-General and relevant UN agencies to consult with women and women-led organizations "to

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develop effective mechanisms for providing protection from violence, including in particular sexual violence” (UNSCR 1820: Art. 10). This language reflected emphasis on women as agents rather than solely victims and the assumption that the participation of women would change the political environment (Shepherd 2011: 508).

During the following year, UNSCR 1888 (2009) was adopted, which emphasized the responsibility of “civilian and military leaders, consistent with the principle of command responsibility, to demonstrate commitment and political will to prevent sexual violence and to combat impunity and enforce accountability” (UNSCR 1888: Preamble). UNSCR 1888 further stated that women’s increased participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding would transform the security sector to be more accessible and responsible to all groups of a population (UNSCR 1888). Within the same year, the UN Security Council also adopted UNSCR 1889 on women’s participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. UNSCR 1889 criticized that “women in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations continue to be often considered as victims and not as actors in addressing and resolving situations of armed conflicts” and stressed the need to “focus not only on protection of women but also on their empowerment” (UNSCR 1889: Preamble). UNSCR 1889 reiterated that “an understanding of the impact of situations of armed conflict on women and girls (...) and effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process (...) can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security” (UNSCR

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1889: Preamble). Its first article “urges Member States, international and regional organisations to take further measures to improve women’s participation during all stages of peace processes, particularly in conflict resolution, post-conflict planning and peacebuilding” (UNSCR 1889: Art. 1).

The establishment of the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in February 2010 further advanced the momentum on protection and the development of policies to address the issue. The Secretary-General report recommended improved monitoring, analysis and reporting to guide preventive policy responses. UNSCR 1960 adopted in December 2010 formally requested the Secretary General “to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, including rape in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict and other situations relevant to the implementation of resolution 1888 (2009)” (UNSCR 1960: Art. 8). Three years later, UNSCR 2106 affirmed “that women’s political, social and economic empowerment, gender equality and the enlistment of men and boys in the effort to combat all forms of violence against women are central to long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” (UNSCR 2106: Preamble). It recognized again “the need for more systematic monitoring of and attention to sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” (UNSCR 2106: Art. 5). In 2014, the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict attracted unprecedented international policy attention on the issue. More than 140 UN Member States endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Global Summit

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also marked the launch of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The protocol seeks to provide basic standards of best practices on the documentation of sexual violence as a crime under international law for promoting accountability (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2014).

In sum, women's protection from sexual violence in conflict is starting to become established as a focus area in international security and development with a fairly established institutionalized format. Realizing the policy decisions, however, is a different struggle. In the work to turn policy into action, a good understanding of the causes of sexual violence in warzones should shape the implementation of the resolutions and protection policies. This chapter now turns to feminist and conflict research findings on sexual violence in conflict before examining policy implications for protection and prevention.

Research on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

The following discussion first focuses on feminist research on sexual violence, reviewing essentialist, structuralist and social constructivist feminist explanations. We then examine trends and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence that empirical research has documented. Lastly, we turn to the causes and motives behind sexual violence that different research approaches have brought forward before examining their implications for prevention policies.

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Feminist Research on Sexual Violence in Conflict

Some feminist researchers have maintained that women's lack of social, political and economic participation explains sexual violence against them in conflict

(Brownmiller 1975; MacKinnon 1994; Seifert 1994). Inger Skjelsbæk categorized the existing feminist literature into three different epistemologies and potential

explanations: the essentialist, the structuralist and the social constructivist

perspective (Skjelsbæk 2001). The essentialist perspective holds that all women in

war zones are potential victims of sexual violence because war increases men's

opportunities for rape. "War provides men with the perfect psychological backdrop

to give vent to their contempt for women", Susan Brownmiller argued four decades

ago in her seminal study on rape (Brownmiller 1975: 22). Sam Cook reasserted,

"sexual violence is both a cause and consequence of low levels of women's

participation in all decision-making and, in fact, participation in day-to-day life"

(Cook 2009: 128). According to this logic, "rape happens during war for the same

reasons it happens during peace" and is rooted in "inequality, discrimination, male

domination and aggression, misogyny and the entrenched socialization of sexual

myth" (Tompkins 1994: 851). Essentialist approaches are inherently limited in their

explanatory potential and do not account for varying patterns of sexual violence in

conflicts and for the targeting of men in some wars.

From a structuralist perspective, some women in war zone become victims of sexual

violence due to polarized patriarchal gender relations intersecting with a targeted

social group identity (ethnic, religious or political). This argument holds that women

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are targeted because they embody the socio-cultural group identity and their victimization shames male relatives and the wider social group who failed to protect them (Bastick, Grimm and Kunz 2007). The structuralist perspective can be linked to arguments about masculinity and militarization. According to Cynthia Enloe, “militarization (...) often depends on persuading individual men that their own manhood will be fully validated only if they perform as soldiers, either in the state’s military or in insurgent autonomous or quasi-autonomous forces” (Enloe 1998: 213). Goldstein (2003) argued that militarized masculinities are fundamental to war. While this is an important argument, the oversimplification stating that sexual violence is a form of ‘ethnic’ violence targeting enemy women does not hold as a general explanation for sexual violence in war. The reason is that there is quite a variation in sexual violence during conflict. In fact, there are many conflicts where the level of sexual violence is very low (Wood 2006: 2011). Creating “mono-causal” theories therefore risks oversimplifying a complex problem; sexual violence in war is unlikely to serve one single purpose (Leiby 2009: 447). A further inherent limitation of the structuralist perspective is the ignorance of the sexual victimization of men. The Bosnian civil war was not only characterized by mass rapes of women but also widespread and systematic sexual violence against men, albeit on a much lower scale (Zarkov 2001: 72).

The final perspective in feminist research, the social constructivist perspective, focuses on gender relations as produced and re-produced by human interaction rather than as given through a patriarchal structure. This perspective assumes that

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women *and* men can be victims of sexual violence, which masculinizes the identity of the perpetrator and feminizes the identity of the victim (Skjelsbæk 2001: 215). The key element of masculinity is power (Zarkov 2001). Sexual violence against men is assumed to take place in all conflicts for which sexual violence is reported but often remains buried under the rubric of abuse or torture (Sivakumaran 2007). In conflicts in which sexual violence has been properly investigated, “male sexual violence has been recognized as regular and unexceptional, pervasive and widespread, although certainly not at the rate of sexual violence committed against women” (Sivakumaran 2007: 259). Sexual violence against men is likely to be related to sexual violence against women; both forms of atrocities rely on the social construction of masculinity and femininity and respective power relations. Including male victims of sexual violence in analysis and policy efforts for prevention may therefore also result in more nuanced understandings of women’s protection.

Empirical Research of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts

Empirical research has provided a more nuanced understanding of the problem of sexual violence in war. This line of inquiry has advanced our knowledge beyond case study-based and ethnicity-oriented research that emerged after the Bosnian and Rwandan war, documenting and analyzing patterns of violence on a global scale. Most notably, it has provided evidence that wartime rape is not ubiquitous. Elisabeth Wood found that low levels of sexual violence were reported in some of the most deadly armed conflicts, such as the war in Sri Lanka and the Israel/Palestine conflict (Wood 2006). Dara Kay Cohen showed that of 86 civil wars between 1980 and 2009,

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for 18 conflicts only isolated reports of rape were coded and 15 wars had no reports of rape (Cohen 2013b). Wood has also shown within-conflict variation; the extent of sexual violence committed by different armed actors within the same conflict can vary significantly (Wood 2006). For example, in Sierra Leone's civil war, all armed groups perpetrated sexual violence while in El Salvador the insurgents rarely committed such atrocities against the civilian population. Research even found variation on the level of the armed group, showing that repertoires of violence, including sexual violence, can change during distinct conflict periods (Wood 2006). It is also important to note variation in the different forms of sexual violence, such as mass rape and enforced pregnancy in the Bosnian war or sexual slavery and sexual torture in Liberia (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013).

Recent statistical analysis provided further evidence on these arguments. A new Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset, which covers all active conflicts between 1989 and 2009, showed that of the 76 countries included in the dataset, "17 reportedly experienced sexual violence at the highest prevalence level by one or more conflict actors during at least one year of the study" (Cohen and Nordås 2014: 423). According to the data, 14 percent of conflicts experienced sexual violence at the highest prevalence level while 43 percent had no reports of such atrocities (ibid). With regard to regional dimensions, "63% of active conflicts in Africa reported at least one year at either of the highest two prevalence levels of sexual violence, while the comparable figures for Asia and Europe are 39% and 26%" (ibid). A serious under-reporting of such atrocities in armed conflicts needs to be assumed, especially

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because a significant number of rape victims in war are killed subsequently, making reliable estimation exceedingly difficult (Peterman, Palermo and Bredenkamp 2011). Yet, even when taking such assumptions into account, these cross-national studies reveal a complex pattern of sexual violence in armed conflict and suggest that multiple causal factors of escalation and constraint are at work (Wood 2012: 390).

Causes and Motives behind Conflict-related Sexual Violence

Feminist and empirical research have, thus, provided us both with broader theories and empirical trends which increases our understanding of the phenomena of conflict-related sexual violence. What can research then tell us about causes and motives to assist us in more effectively addressing the problem? The variation in forms and levels of sexual violence is likely to be related to multiple causes and motives on the individual and on the group level. Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern documented a range of individual motives among Congolese soldiers. They distinguished between 'lust rape' as related to sexual need versus 'evil rape', including particularly brutal atrocities, which they related to the frustrations experienced within a war environment (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2009). Cynthia Enloe reflected on "recreational rape", "strategic rape" in view of national security doctrines, and "mass rape", such as during the Bosnian war (Enloe 2000: 111). Elisabeth Wood distinguished between individual opportunistic motives for rape and strategic motivations in view of group objectives (Wood 2012: 393). She defined 'opportunistic sexual violence' as "violence carried out for private reason" in contrast to group reasons, and 'strategic sexual violence' as "a pattern or instances of sexual

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violence purposefully adopted by commanders in pursuit of group objectives” (ibid).

While opportunistic motives and patriarchal norms play an important role, they do not account for the absence of sexual violence by some armed actors with relatively easy access to the civilian population.

The pattern of interaction between armed groups and civilians may mitigate individual opportunity. When armed groups need to rely on civilians for the provision of food, shelter and information, they may effectively prohibit their members from engaging in sexual violence. For example, research on the ‘comfort women’ system of the Japanese army during World War II showed that commanders were concerned about the impact of reports of massive sexual violence during the so-called ‘Rape of Nanking’ on the civilian population because commanders feared uprisings (Chang 1997; Goldstein 2003; Wood 2006). Empirical research has documented that state forces are significantly more likely to commit sexual violence than insurgent forces (Cohen 2013b; Cohen and Nordås 2014). State forces can use sexual violence against civilians as a form of terror to curb civilian support for insurgent groups (Leiby 2009: 466; Wood 2006: 316, 332). By contrast, insurgent groups often rely on civilians for support and are therefore less likely to use sexual violence as to not risk alienating the civilian population (Wood 2009).

On the level of the armed group, research has identifies leadership, ideology, recruitment patterns and institutions within armed groups as crucial factors that can mitigate the use of sexual violence. The leadership of an armed group may view sexual violence against civilians as detrimental for group goals. Yet, effective

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prohibition of such atrocities depends on enforcement capacities within armed groups (Wood 2009: 136). Drawing on the cases of Sri Lanka and Peru, Wood argued that an ideology conducive to preventing sexual violence combined with strong leadership and harsh punishment resulted in a low probability of sexual violence against civilians (Wood 2006). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone equally put “strict laws prohibiting rape and assault” into place and declared it as “counter-revolutionary”, yet it became known as a “paradigmatic perpetrator group” (Marks 2014). Commanders viewed rape as a form of organizational chaos and killed perpetrators during the early formation of the group but sexual violence against civilians became widespread (ibid). According to Marks, selective and ineffective enforcement practices explain the pervasiveness of sexual violence (Marks 2014: 73). Thus, rape may not be explicitly ordered by commanders to occur on a widespread level (Wood 2012: 394). Furthermore, the RUF leadership promoted forced marriage as an antidote to rape to reinforce social control, legitimatizing a certain form of sexual violence but prohibiting others. ‘Marriage’ thereby came to shape how women within fighting forces understood their social position and navigated their daily limited protection; as a social institution, marriage “controlled gender relations and combatant behaviour by establishing reciprocal obligations and a society in the bush” (Marks 2014: 77).

The strength of leadership, indoctrination and enforcement of rules determine if combatants’ conduct reflect the ideology and strategy of the group (Wood 2012).

When armed groups are characterized by weak rule enforcement, combatants’ norms

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and socialization may determine the extent of sexual violence against civilians.

Combatants' norms "may be those with which recruits enter the group (possibly heterogeneous), those produced in the course of the socialization of initial induction into the group, those produced by powerful wartime small-group processes, or those selectively reinforced by the hierarchy" (Wood 2009: 136). Wood introduced a third category of sexual violence, namely sexual violence as a social practice, which transcends the perceived duality of opportunistic sexual violence carried out for private reasons and strategic rape purposefully ordered by commanders.

Commanders may tolerate rape because they perceive the costs of effective prohibition as too high. Sexual violence as a practice is distinct from opportunistic sexual violence because it is shaped by socialization within armed groups. Such practices are particularly important on the level of the small combat unit because researchers assume that combatants are not primarily motivated by grand ideologies such as patriotism but by commitment to the "primary group" of fellow combatants (Shils and Janowitz 1948). On the level of the small combat unit, Cohen (2013b) argued that one of the explanations for sexual violence in armed conflicts is combatant socialization. When armed groups heavily rely on forced recruitment they often display weak unit cohesion and are therefore more likely to use gang rapes to strengthen group cohesion. Other researchers have equally emphasized the bonding effects of gang rape in settings of youth gangs and armed conflict (e.g. Goldstein 2003).

Social dynamics within armed groups and groups' institutions, ideologies,

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leadership and recruitment patterns are major explanatory factors that shape escalation and restraint of sexual violence in conflicts. However, research on dynamics within armed groups cannot explain high levels of sexual violence against women perpetrated by civilians in war environments or by civilians and former combatants during the post-conflict period. Feminist research has critiqued antagonistic perceptions of armed conflict and 'post-conflict' conditions, referring to a "gendered peace" to describe the significant backlash against women's freedom and upsurge of domestic violence against women that often characterize the official post-conflict situation (Pankhurst 2008; Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn 2011). The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict Dataset confirmed that reports on sexual violence often continue into the post-conflict period, "sometimes at very high levels" (Cohen and Nordås 2014: 425). Recent research on the DRC has shown a disturbing pattern of normalization of sexual atrocities among civilians. In the South Kivu province of the DRC, "from 2004 to 2008, the number of civilian rapes increased by an astounding 1733% or 17 fold, while the number of rapes by armed combatants decreased by 77%" (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Oxfam 2010). Another survey study on sexual violence in the DRC confirmed that a significant number of women - 228 out of 1000 - had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner (Peterman et al 2011). Eriksson Baaz and Stern argued that while sexual violence was surely a problem in the DRC prior to the outbreak of fighting, local women and human rights organizations attributed its rampant spread to the disintegration of traditional and community structures during the war (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010: 43). Civilians in the DRC suggested that rape had become a norm for many men who grew up during

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a decade of intense fighting (Kelly, Kabanga, Cragin, Alcayna-Stevens, Haider and Vanrooyen 2012). Women and men interviewed in the DRC also explained how the concept of 'women as property' contributed to the harsh discrimination of rape victims and the devastating impact of sexual violence on entire communities (Kelly et al 2012: 292). One potential explanation for high levels of sexual violence in the post-conflict environment may be the long-term effect of combatant socialization during wartime. A related explanation is combatant and civilian traumatization and brutalization during war (Skjelsbæk 2013). However, more research on both combatant and civilian perpetrators in war environments is needed to uncover the mechanisms at work.

Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

If causes and motives are so much more complex than the discourse on rape as a weapon of war indicates, how can we then draw on research to understand how to better prevent violence? Statistical analysis of rape during civil wars found no supporting evidence for the proposed link between gender inequality and levels of sexual violence in armed conflict (Cohen 2013b). Similarly, case study research concluded that "rape in the DRC conflict cannot be explained as reflecting either particularly unequal gender relations or a particularly high prevalence of sexual violence prior to the war" (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010). Even though on a global scale, sexual violence in conflict is not statistically associated with any of the common explanations, such as ethnic or secessionist war, genocides and gender inequality, these factors may be important for understanding the context of wartime

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rape in specific cases (Cohen; Hoover Green and Wood 2013). Consequently, prevention policies need to be tailored to the specific country context, conflict dynamics and characteristics of armed groups.

Empirical research has led to detailed policy recommendations that target armed groups and their internal institutions and practices, focusing on patterns of recruitment, training, socialization, and discipline (Wood 2009; Nordås 2013; Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013; Skjelsbæk 2013; USIP 2014). Wood's research distinguished between a top-down and a bottom-up logic of prevention. The top-down logic implies that if commanders judge sexual violence against civilians as detrimental to their efforts and if they are able to enforce adequate norms and punish transgressions, sexual violence in conflict is rare (Wood 2009: 140). The bottom-up logic finds that if individual combatants and small combatant groups are socialized into norms that prohibit sexual violence or all forms of violence against civilians, wartime rape should be rare.

Consequently, immediate protection policies should focus on the leadership of armed groups and the norms they convey through their institutions, socialization and training practices. Interventions that target armed groups should focus on interrupting peer dynamics that encourage and re-enforce sexual violence for proving masculinity (Wood 2011: 58). If the leadership level of an armed group is willing to prohibit sexual violence, practices such as political education and strengthening group institutions may effectively curb widespread sexual violence

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against civilians. Ending impunity for perpetrators and commanders who knew or could have known is a vital element in undermining the top-down logic. With regard to state forces research suggests that international advocacy campaigns on naming and shaming could be effective (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013). From a bottom-up perspective, the general promotion of norms against sexual violence linked to gender equality both before and during armed conflict may influence individual combatants and small combatant groups to exercise restraint. Changing patriarchal norms is also decisive within the post-conflict environment to improve the situation of survivors and lessen the devastating impact of sexual violence on families and communities (Nordås 2013).

It is important to connect protection policies further to research on the motives of individual perpetrators. These have been shown to shift between attitudes about rape. Perpetrators in the DRC sometimes described it as “a great evil and a tool that enemy combatants use to destroy the DRC” while at other times describing how sexual violence is committed within their armed group (Kelly 2010: 11). Some perpetrators reflect on how rapes negatively impact on relations with civilians and on how sexual violence can destroy communities (Kelly 2010). Future research on perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence is needed to design effective prevention strategies and promote normative change. Apart from these prevention strategies that targeted armed groups and individual combatants, prevention of armed conflict and conflict resolution efforts remain of course the most effective means for protection from conflict-related sexual violence.

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Conclusions

This chapter has reiterated that policies on protection from sexual violence need to acknowledge that the causes and motives behind such atrocities are multifaceted and complex, requiring nuanced examination of the issue on multiple levels of analysis.

The review of the UN Security Council resolutions has shown that women's participation has repeatedly been emphasized in relation to protection. Yet, the international discourse and policy efforts often focus too narrowly on preventing 'rape as a weapon of war' without paying equal attention to increasing women's participation in peace processes.

When policy discourses and initiatives on protection focus too narrowly on the international prosecution of perpetrators, key findings from research about the centrality of dynamics within military and armed groups and the promotion of women's political, social and economic participation are left out. Many feminist and conflict researchers therefore converge on criticism of the dominant policy discourse of "rape as a weapon of war" (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013; Marks 2014; USIP 2014).

For example, it is perceived that this discourse underlies both the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict organized by the UK government as well as the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Although not questioning that international prosecution of sexual violence in conflict as a war crime is important, both feminist and conflict researchers have criticized that the narrative provides coherence for a messy

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phenomenon and the optimism that such atrocities can be ended if perpetrators fear prosecution.

As this chapter has shown, the critique against the 'rape as a weapon of war' discourse can be divided into two sub-arguments. First of all, the discourse risks limiting our understanding of sexual violence in war primarily to the rape of women and girls, excluding other forms of sexual violence and sexual torture as well as the victimization of men. Second, the narrative can be misunderstood to assume that all armed groups have functioning command control. Such an assumption would conclude that rape is oversimplified to mean that it is always used for strategic reasons. While leadership responsibility today has started to entail the need for prevention if the leader suspects that there is even a risk for his/her troops to carry out such violence, research strongly underlines the need to support leadership and institutional capacity. As this review of the literature has demonstrated, sexual violence in war relates to multiple motives and causes that differ on the individual and group level. Commanding officers can actively promote rape and other forms of sexual violence against the civilian population but more often rape is tacitly accepted and not effectively prohibited (Wood 2011). Third, and finally, the few studies that we have of perpetrators have shown that, on this individual level, they display a wide range of motives for sexual violence in conflict, ranging from individual opportunism to obeying commanders (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013). Consequently, enforcing policy need to consider this complexity.

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This chapter has further identified a middle ground between empirical and feminist social constructivist approaches on the notion that “patriarchy is arguably a necessary condition for the occurrence of widespread rape” because “it is hard to imagine widespread rape not only of girls and women but of ‘enemy’ boys and men without the underlying justification provided by patriarchal social norms for sexual violence against supposed inferiors” (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood 2013: 6).

Women’s protection in armed conflict and women’s participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding need to be understood as interconnected because “the logic of rape builds on the socio-political and symbolic inequalities between men and women” (Skjelsbæk 2012: 163).

As has been argued, increasing the protection from conflict-related sexual violence cannot be de-coupled from UNSCR 1325’s broader mandate to work toward gender equality and women’s participation. Although social constructions of masculinity and femininity may not be causal for wartime rape they exert important constitutive effects. Efforts addressing gender inequality and women’s empowerment in conflict zones are a crucial part of long-term protection strategies. A too narrow focus on conflict-related sexual violence risks reinforcing gender stereotypes of ‘women as victims’ without agency and undermines women’s empowerment and protection. For example, donor agencies’ narrow focus on sexual violence against women in the DRC resulted in a lack of interest in maternal health care, women’s economic empowerment, and political participation (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010). It even resulted in incentives for women to present themselves as rape victims in order to

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access basic health services. Narrow protection policies further tend to neglect “men’s and boys’ legitimate rights and needs as survivors of violence, including sexual violence” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010: 45).

Protection from conflict-related sexual violence demands a complementary focus on women’s participation. This focus on women’s empowerment is particularly important during the post-conflict period when public rhetoric often builds on ideologies of ‘restoration’ and ‘returning’ to the pre-war order, re-associating women with cultural and traditional norms, motherhood and peace (Pankhurst 2003). Policies and projects aiming at increasing women’s participation need to capitalize on the gains in empowerment women often make during conflict periods (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon 2005). Post-conflict peacebuilding is much more likely to succeed in societies where women enjoy relatively higher social status and more opportunities to express a voice in the peacemaking process (Gizelis 2009). In conclusion, increasing the participation of women in peace processes directly relates to protection; “how we make peace determines whether the end of armed conflict means a safer world for women or simply ushers in a different and in some cases more pernicious era of violence against them” (Steinberg 2011: 122).

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¹ The text of the declaration is available online :

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