Selected publications by researchers at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325, which called for women’s equal participation in promoting peace and security and for greater efforts to protect women, who are more exposed to violence during and after conflict than men. The volume takes stock of the current state of knowledge on Women, Peace and Security issues, including efforts to increase women’s participation in post-conflict reconstruction strategies and their protection from wartime sexual violence. The authors also highlight the resolution’s potential to advance the rights of women in a wide variety of spheres by including analysis of legal, economic, and policy implications. This volume underscores that much remains to be done at both a conceptual and operational level to develop effective conflict prevention and management strategies that are inclusive of women. The authors take a forward-looking approach, emphasizing that setting a well-grounded research agenda is the first step toward realizing the resolution’s dual goals of power and protection.

The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina

This book provides a conceptual framework for understanding war rape and its impact, through empirical examination of the case of Bosnia. Providing a contextual understanding of sexual violence in war, and situating Bosnian war rape in relation to subsequent conflicts, the book offers a methodological outline of how sexual violence in war can be studied from a political-psychological perspective. It presents empirical findings from the field that show what war rape can entail in the aftermath of armed conflict for victims and their communities. Through its comprehensive approach to Bosnian experiences, the volume expands the conceptualization of victimhood and challenges the assumption that sexual violence is a particularly difficult theme to study because of victim silence. Rather, the author demonstrates there are many voices that can provide insight and understandings of war rape and its impact without having to compromise the safety and privacy of individual victims. Finally, the book shows the ways in which individual experiences of war rape are shaped by national and international discourses on gender, sexuality and politics. This book will be of interest to students of political psychology, war and conflict studies, European politics, ethnic conflict, politics and IR in general.
Affirmative Action: A Kick-Start with Limitations
Ashild Falch, 2010. PRIO Policy Brief, 2. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
An increasing number of countries emerging from armed conflict have introduced mechanisms for affirmative action to guarantee women’s representation in post-conflict political processes. Burundi and Nepal are two of these countries, and both introduced quotas to bring about an unprecedented number of women into their political institutions after post-conflict elections. These positive achievements, however, should not deter us from the many remaining challenges that impede women’s participation in decision-making. Women have gained increased presence in political institutions, but entrenched patriarchal norms, gender inequality and discriminatory practices continue to hinder their ability to participate effectively in political decision-making. In order to reverse this trend, broader attitudinal and institutional changes as well as a qualitative increase in their capabilities are in order.

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Group Identity - A Neglected Asset: Determinants of Social and Political Participation among Female Ex-fighters in Guatemala
Many of the armed conflicts after World War II have had female fighters, such as El Salvador, Eritrea, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. In the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process that followed the signing of the Guatemalan peace accord in 1996, altogether 766 women were demobilised. This article seeks to explain why some of these women became politically and socially active in the post-conflict peacebuilding phase, whereas others did not. Contrary to the negative experiences of female ex-fighters from Sierra Leone and West Africa, the article points out that the Guatemalan female ex-fighters preserved a positive group identity developed during the war. In particular, the war experiences represented an asset for social and political participation to those of the female ex-fighters that reintegrated collectively—together with their male ex-combatants. The article concludes that future DDR programming should take into account the importance of group identity and the needs and the own wishes of female ex-fighters from different war contexts.

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Engaging Men: The Abatangamuco and Women’s Empowerment in Burundi
The Abatangamuco are both a formal organization and, less formally, a movement of rural men in Burundi. The main task these men have set themselves is to challenge traditional gender-role expectations in their communities through personal change, testimonies and local community outreach activities. Its origin is a group of rural Burundian men who had begun to question their traditional ways of life: Was domestic abuse, family tyranny, squandering of the family’s limited financial resources and forcing the wife to carry a vastly disproportionate amount of the burden of work conducive for prosperity and economic development? The name, organizational structure and outreach activities followed an initial collaboration between these men and CARE Burundi, who were seeking ways of working with local men in support of women’s empowerment. The name ‘Abatangamuco’ literally means ‘those who shine light’, and men involved in the organization see themselves as individuals who have realized the errors of their old ways, have ‘seen the light’ in terms of how they ought to live, and wish to spread this knowledge and outlook to as many others as possible.

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Trick or Treat? The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security


The adoption in October 2000 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is regarded as a groundbreaking achievement in putting women’s rights on the peace and security agenda of the UN. Critics have suggested that the adoption of this resolution has made little difference in terms of changed policies and practices. I argue, however, that it has nevertheless made a difference. The adoption of Resolution 1325 is the expression of a new norm in the making. Furthermore, it illustrates how cross-cutting thematic issues such as “women, peace, and security” today are placed on the agenda and nurtured by the UN Secretariat in close cooperation not only with member states, but, just as important, with networks of nongovernmental organizations and individual experts.

Sexual Violence in African Conflicts, 1989–2009: What the data show


This policy brief summarizes key trends in conflict-related sexual violence in 48 conflicts in 33 African countries, encompassing 236 armed-conflict actors, including state armies, militias and rebel groups.

Findings from study area:

- Sexual violence was reported to be perpetrated by a minority of armed-conflict actors;
- There was a slight increase over time in the share of actors that perpetrated sexual violence at a massive level;
- African state armies were frequently reported as perpetrators;
- Sexual violence was often reported when there were relatively few reported killings;
- Sexual violence at times continued at a high level in the post-conflict period.

Preventing Perpetrators: How to go from protection to prevention of sexual violence in war?


An acute problem regarding sexual violence in war is that far too few perpetrators are stopped. While both the rhetoric of protection and policy measures are important, they may have overshadowed the role of the perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence and the need to focus on preventive measures. It is therefore time to shift the political discussion from the responsibility to protect to the responsibility to prevent sexual violence from occurring. This can be achieved through three decisive approaches at different levels:

- By increasing focused research on individual perpetrators and their backgrounds (individual focus);
- By holding military leaders responsible for crimes of sexual violence committed by soldiers under their command and ensuring that all soldiers, as well as aiders and abettors, understand that acts of sexual violence in war are criminal acts and not an integral part of a military culture (group focus); and
- By fostering military cultures in which perpetrators of sexual violence are exposed and condemned (cultural focus).
Gender, Peace and Conflict

This book explores the key role of gender in peace research, conflict resolution and international politics. Rather than simply ‘add gender and stir’ the aim is to transcend different disciplinary boundaries and conceptual approaches to provide a more integrated basis for research and study. To this end Gender, Peace and Conflict uniquely combines theoretical chapters alongside empirical case studies to demonstrate the importance of a gender perspective to both theory and practice in conflict resolution and peace research. The theoretical chapters explore the gender relationship and engage with the many stereotypical elisions and dichotomies that dominate and distort the issue, such as the polarized pairs of femininity and peace versus masculinity and war. The case study chapters move beyond theoretical critique to focus on issues such as sexual violence in war, the role of women in military groups and peacekeeping operations, and the impact of a ‘critical mass’ of women in political decision-making. Gender, Peace and Conflict is essential reading for academics, students and practitioners across peace studies, conflict resolution and international politics.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission and Gender: A Case of Norm Reinforcement

In recent years, increasing reference has been made to the issue area of ‘women, peace and security’, reflecting a set of norms that are gradually becoming institutionalized within the UN. This article explores the validity of such claims through an empirical study of the relatively newly established UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the extent to which gender language and concerns have been integrated into the latter’s founding resolutions and deliberations on peacebuilding strategies. The article suggests that ‘women, peace and security’ concerns have emerged as a legitimate normative framework in the peacebuilding context. The PBC has served an important role in reinforcing this normative framework. However, the actual inclusion of women in strategic thinking and policy development is still dependent on the lobbying of dedicated norm entrepreneurs among member states, UN bureaucrats and nongovernmental organizations.

Newsletter: PRIO Gender, Peace & Security Update
Edited by Torunn L. Tryggestad and Jenny K. Lorentzen. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

The PRIO Gender, Peace & Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by Gender, Conflict and Peacebuilding project at PRIO in response to growing interest among the public for information about Women, Peace and Security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions. Sign up for the newsletter at www.prio.org/gpsupdate