

Gender and Conflict

THEME 2019-2020

The primary objective is to analyze how gender influences the experience of sexual violence by women, men, and other vulnerable populations, including children and gender/sexual minorities among the positions; victims, perpetrators, and bystanders/witnesses, in the aftermath of armed conflict (while these categories are conceptually distinct, any one individual could occupy all three roles in a given context).

We will explore the role of gendered concepts such as masculinity and femininity and their relationship to vulnerability and resilience. In approaching these topics, we will take a nuanced and comparative perspective, acknowledging the wide variety of gendered concepts and interactions that exist in different geographical regions across the globe. This will lead to a more inclusive understanding of how the enduring gender inequalities generated through violence can be enumerated and redressed in post-conflict settlements and the obstacles that interfere with such accounting.

The importance of gender and conflict was emphasized with the allocation of the Nobel Peace Prize of 2018 to two individuals, Nadia Murad a female survivor and witness of sexual violence, and Denis Mukwege, a male advocate and gynecologist, both helpers of women victims of rape. The announcement highlighted "their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict," noting "both laureates have made a crucial contribution to focusing attention on, and combating, such war crimes." (Nobel Peace Prize Announcement). As the announcement pointed out, UNSC Resolution 1820 was unanimously adopted a decade ago, condemning the use of sexual violence as an instrument of war, and declaring that "rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes (2008)."

Armed conflicts in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Uganda and Yemen have had a significant effect on civilians. Among those who are most disproportionately affected are women, children, and gender/sexual minorities. Sexual violence is one of the more common forms of violence inflicted on these vulnerable populations during times of conflict. Reducing the vulnerability of these populations and increasing their resilience is essential to promote inclusiveness and justice. Some researchers have also suggested that it can even prevent the occurrence of armed conflicts (UNDESA, 2017). The importance of respecting women and

other vulnerable groups (including children and sexual minorities) during conflict is also explicitly stated in numerous international resolutions, such as UNSC Resolution 1325 (2005) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

In the academic year 2018-2019, this Theme was preceded by an Advanced Study Group at The Pufendorf IAS, "ASG Gender and Conflict". Our work within the group provided us with an opportunity to discuss research and literature pertaining to masculinity, femininity, and sexual violence. We identified three categories of actors involved in sexual violence: perpetrators of sexual violence, victims of this violence, and witnesses/bystanders to this violence.

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