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# Breaking Barrier: Exploring the Intersection Of Conflict and Gender Security

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the intricate connection between war and the security of women, under the theme of "Breaking Barriers." Consequently, it offers a comprehensive analysis of the existing research on the intricate relationship between gender, warfare, and the absence of conflict. The field of security studies has historically lacked a platform for open discussions on gender or gender equality. Conversely, feminist theorists have exerted a substantial influence on the discourse surrounding the examination of conflict and peace. The study of the interaction of gender, war, and peace is a recently developed area that incorporates several disciplines such as economics, sociology, feminism, and international politics.

**Keywords:** Breaking Barriers, Peace, Women, Conflict, Models.

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## 1. Overview

Present politically progressive society may raise doubts regarding the prudence of commencing a presentation with a statement from a conservative and polarizing female political figure.[1,2] Nevertheless, during the 1980s, there were scarce opportunities for aspiring girls who aimed to attain the rank of general, as such a position was non-existent at that time. [3,4] This was especially accurate for women who attained success independently and were not related to influential males like sisters or daughters. [5,6,7] A limited number of women were perceived as exemplary figures for girls who had an inclination towards politics, social work, or other areas that have historically been predominantly male-dominated. The given text is "[8,9]".

Initially, there was a regrettable scarcity of "mothers". [12,13] Autesserre, Bakke Cunningham, Cohen, Fortna, Kadera, Leeds, Mitchell,[14] Thomas, and Walter are among the notable female researchers who have significantly influenced the research agenda in the systematic examination of war and peace over the last two decades. While the number of women studying gender and security is small, their growing presence in academia has led to significant contributions in various fields including civil wars, rebel groups, terrorism, peace agreement implementation, conflict fragmentation, conflict management, peacekeeping, horizontal inequalities, violent armed conflict, alliances, regional agreements, organizations, and the establishment of new ones. Examining the correlation between gender and war and peace is regarded as a highly auspicious domain of investigation within the conflict and peace studies discipline.

Initially, there was scepticism about examining the correlation between gender and conflict. Historically, the subject of gender has been examined mostly in the realm of feminist studies rather than traditional security studies. Feminist studies that portray women as passive victims of patriarchy fail to acknowledge the fact that women have actively participated in armed rebellions and movements throughout many historical eras and geographical contexts. An empirical study was recently undertaken to investigate the participation of women as warriors in wars, specifically examining their roles in both war and peace. This new research aimed to analyze the role of women in contributing to economic progress. Simultaneously, there was a shift in the empirical research about women's involvement in active warfare.

## Literature review

Mohanty (2022) [31] highlights that the marginalization of specific women's perspectives due to systemic inequalities is a significant obstacle to the collective mobilization of women. The preservation of differences in American society is maintained by the exertion of power and the suppression of particular voices. Political and

social philosophy extensively analyze distinctions such as gender, ethnicity, financial status, and sexual orientation. Feminist studies utilize analytical and methodological techniques, such as transnationalism and intersectionality, to address and eliminate power imbalances that impede women from effectively working together towards a shared goal, particularly the enactment of legislation that would benefit all women.

Osborn, Bill S. (2021) [32] Women in leadership roles provide a concrete example of discrimination and the contradiction between the desired goal of equality based on biological sex and socially created gender, which becomes evident when we analyze gender inequality. This provides further proof that women's concerns regarding their personal welfare and safety are being ignored and underestimated. Gender-based discrimination persists even among the highest levels of leadership. Moreover, it is plausible that women in positions of leadership are expected to adhere to particular behavioral norms in order to sustain their positions of authority. Republican women senators are forbidden from engaging in collaboration with Democratic women senators to advance measures that specifically address women's concerns, even if such cooperation could potentially be advantageous for women.

This narrative study thoroughly investigates the correlation between gender security and combat within the context of the overarching topic of "Breaking Barriers." It derives inspiration from diverse fields like politics, international political economics, political philosophy, sociology, gender and feminist political economy, humanitarian studies, conflict studies, and post-conflict studies. Due to the limited availability of written literature on this subject, a narrative review was considered the most suitable approach. This is because it offers a comprehensive overview of the core concepts and the broader literature that have influenced the progress of this complex area of research. This strategy improves comprehension by integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines and areas of expertise.

### **The impact of conflict on women**

Gender differences are evident in society overall, but they tend to worsen during times of conflict. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the indirect consequences of war, including sexual and gender-based violence, limited access to healthcare, food, and education. However, it is important to note that the majority of direct casualties in conflicts are men and boys. Since 1990, nations undergoing conflict have regularly demonstrated elevated rates of maternal and newborn mortality in comparison to nations unaffected by conflict. Furthermore, studies suggest that essential reproductive and maternal health services are considerably less available to households with limited resources, low educational attainment, and living in remote regions of conflict-affected nations. Unfortunately, some areas affected by conflict also experience widespread sexual and gender-based violence, which is linked to substantial mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Women are disproportionately affected by war-related displacement compared to men. After a disaster or population movement, women seem to have a greater inclination to take on the burden of caring for children and the elderly. Traditionally, women and children are the last ones to be removed from a conflict zone. In order to ensure their own survival and the well-being of their children, some may resort to engaging in "transactional sex". Nevertheless, the recognition of the gendered nature of caregiving and survival is hardly witnessed during periods of conflict or disaster. The escalation of economic, physiological, and social stressors resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to a rise in instances of domestic violence against women in conflict-affected areas like Yemen. The rising occurrence of homes led by women may mostly be traced to the absence of men resulting from their involvement in warfare and their subsequent incapacity to rejoin with their families. Women in Yemen, who are particularly vulnerable, have resorted to detrimental coping mechanisms such as early marriage and coerced work. The occurrence of both partner and non-partner violence that contributed to the conflict in South Sudan was shaped by traditional marriage customs, gender expectations, and previous encounters with violence.

### **Obstacles faced by women in times of conflict**

Women face multiple perils to their safety, health, and general welfare in areas affected by armed conflict. These obstacles stem from the particular difficulties and susceptibilities that women encounter during times of conflict. The problem of gender-based violence is very prevalent among these difficulties. Women living in regions affected by armed conflict face an elevated likelihood of encountering sexual assault and other forms of physical violence. These hostile behaviours not only cause bodily pain, but also lead to long-lasting psychological injuries that amplify the weight of warfare.

A considerable proportion of women living in regions impacted by armed conflicts have experienced coerced displacement as a direct result of the hostilities. Women who have been displaced are more susceptible to exploitation, human trafficking, and abuse as a result of their precarious circumstances. They are especially vulnerable because they lack access to basic essentials.

Furthermore, the healthcare infrastructures are disrupted during times of war, hence worsening the difficulties encountered by women in obtaining essential medical care. The restricted availability of resources has severe

repercussions, especially for pregnant women and persons in need of obstetric care. Insufficient medical treatment during pregnancy and labor greatly increases the chances of health problems and death for women and their newborns.

One significant obstacle that women encounter is the adverse economic consequences resulting from war. Conflicts can have a catastrophic impact on economies, leading to employment losses and the inability of individuals to support their families. During periods of conflict, women who are already facing financial difficulties as a result of gender-based wage disparities experience heightened levels of pressure. Consequently, the economic stability and quality of life for women may be reduced, potentially leading to an increase in poverty rates.

In times of conflict, existing gender discrimination and inequalities tend to exacerbate, resulting in women being confined to traditional roles and societal expectations. This obstacle hinders the progress of women in their professional and societal pursuits, and it deprives them of the ability to participate in significant decision-making processes.

Women in war zones confront a multitude of issues, including gender-based violence, displacement, insecurity, limited healthcare access, financial difficulties, and the perpetuation of gender discrimination. The safeguarding, welfare, and entitlements of women in conflict-ridden regions rely on our capacity to recognize and eliminate these barriers.

### **Conducting a study on the overlap between feminism and security**

Traditional security studies did not give importance to the subjects of gender and gender equality. Prior security research has primarily determined that gender has minimal to negligible influence on the study of security-related subjects, such as interstate relations and nuclear proliferation. Three theoretical frameworks aim to clarify the reasons for the disregard of gender in the field of security studies. Traditionally, women had less impact on decision-making at the national level because men were the dominant decision-makers. In addition, issues regarding national security and gender equality were not discussed at the highest levels of government. Moreover, the earliest empirical researchers in the subject of war and peace did not consider gender to be a major or changeable characteristic. Thus, incorporating this idea into empirical war models would not substantially enhance the understanding of the variations in war outcomes and peace across different time periods and geographical regions.

Nevertheless, female thinkers have conducted the majority of study pertaining to the topic of war and peace. There is a belief that patriarchal and authoritarian sociocultural systems play a crucial role in causing both war and political violence. Hypermasculinity results in the manifestation of dominance and hostility. Warfare, both between and between governments, exemplifies hierarchical power hierarchies. Feminist academics' objectives and strategies are shaped by their opposition to militarism. Consequently, they often refuse to accept positivism and instead use critical theories and approaches to analyze social structures and the consequences of violence during periods of both conflict and peace.

Feminist studies have provided insightful analyses of conventional security studies by emphasizing the connections between gender and structures of coercive authority. However, no alternative theoretical framework has been developed that might potentially challenge the prevailing explanations for political violence. The contradictory characteristics of gender stereotypes may clarify the reason why feminism has had a restricted influence on the field of security studies. Feminist researchers, mostly focused on male themes, faced challenges in adequately addressing the presence of female soldiers in both international and domestic conflicts due to their emphasis on masculinities and resistance to militarism.

Throughout various historical epochs and in diverse global locales, women have been present in military institutions. Throughout history, women have demonstrated exceptional acts of courage and skill in combat. Notable instances of female combatants include Boudica's counterattack against the Romans, resulting in the destruction of Camulodunum (now Colchester), the Soviet Union's female snipers in World War II, such as Lyudmila Pavlichenko (also known as Lady Death) who allegedly eliminated more than 300 enemies, the Kurdish women fighters who effectively battled against ISIS, the female fighters in El Salvador, and the female fighters in the civil wars of Greece and Spain. A prominent individual in contemporary history is Laskarina "Bouboulina" Pinotsi, originating from the Greek island of Spetses. Bouboulina was a wealthy entrepreneur, a widow, a mother, and the owner of a fleet of commercial ships. Bouboulina, who was 50 years old at the time, took up the position of naval commander during the Greek War of Independence in 1821. She exacerbated the dispute by providing four ships, with her own vessel being the largest. In addition, she commanded a group of foot soldiers consisting of highly skilled warriors from her homeland of Spetses.

This woman did not possess the characteristics of either a mythical being or an overly zealous follower of a particular religion. What motivated her to assume such a pivotal role? What was the impact of her participation in the struggle on the final result? During the fall of Tripoli, Bouboulina allegedly assumed the responsibility of ensuring the protection of Ottoman women. This woman was not a victim, regardless of any other

characterization she may have had. The initial empirical research on gender and warfare mostly concentrated on the participation of women in the military, which is fitting given their courageous nature as fighters.

### **Women's participation in political affairs**

Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council placed significant emphasis on the inclusion of women in discussions. Although there is no concrete evidence demonstrating the impact of women's involvement in the political process on peace negotiations in post-conflict countries, this area of women's participation in the political process in such nations has been extensively studied. Due to the frequent lack of female participation in peace negotiations, it is challenging and unreliable to conduct extensive research on the topic and establish criteria to measure the level of women's involvement in these negotiations.

The participation of women in signing peace agreements is significantly limited; nonetheless, initial research indicates that agreements with female signatories are more inclined to include measures for political reform and have a greater overall rate of execution. The inclusion of female signatories who have connections to and receive support from women's civil society organizations greatly enhances the prospects of peace accords being successfully implemented. Recent research on the influence of heightened female involvement in global peace initiatives has yielded encouraging results. It can be inferred that increasing the representation of women in political leadership roles may contribute to the prolonged maintenance of peace. They interpreted the inclination of female politicians to allocate more funds to social welfare programs rather than the military as a pathway to long-lasting peace, serving as a method to accomplish this objective.

Despite recent research indicating positive outcomes, there is still ongoing controversy regarding the degree to which increasing female involvement in political activities could enhance democratic systems. Which factor has a greater impact on the quality of legislation and the stability of peace: the increasing representation of women in legislatures or the underlying socioeconomic conditions? Explores the reliability of the metrics used to measure the extent of women's empowerment in society. Does the issue depend only on numerical data, in which case having a higher number of women would be preferable? There may also be underlying concerns about the effectiveness of women in influencing policy debates. In order to effectively address the second concern, it is crucial to understand the particular contexts in which women feel most at ease expressing their actual concerns and ambitions. The subsequent logical investigation is whether or not all women have preferences that are identical to each other. Is it necessary to adequately include the collective interests and viewpoints of women when drafting policy decisions? Duflo's prior study could provide a foundation for the development of more sophisticated ideas regarding the participation of women in politics.

Policymakers have prioritized the need to enhance women's participation due to international agreements on gender equality. What are the most efficient strategies to promote increased involvement of women? Regarding this subject, the literature remains unclear and foundational. Resolution 1325 advocates for the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a worldwide approach to attain gender equality in all areas of society, encompassing development and peace. One of the objectives of the resolution is to achieve this. The three fundamental elements of gender mainstreaming are: (1) considering the needs and preferences of both males and females when making decisions; (2) assessing the potential effects of a decision on both genders; and (3) implementing the necessary changes accordingly. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that these processes should not be regarded as unrelated to the main peace initiative, but rather as integral components of it.

Researchers in the fields of peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction were among the first to explore the influence of gender equality on the effectiveness of missions. This study aims to assess the correlation between gender equality and the success of peacekeeping operations, as well as its influence on reforms in the security sector, resulting in a more skilled and less corrupt workforce. Gender budgeting is a powerful method of strategic planning that combines fiscal policy and administration to promote gender equality across different sectors. Development initiatives are increasingly recognizing its growing value. Gender budgeting is a method of strategic planning.

Based on the ongoing study on gender balance in peacekeeping operations, which is now in its preliminary phase due to limited data, there is a greater likelihood of deploying female military and police officers to missions with reduced dangers or in conflict zones. Nevertheless, those places do not have the highest demand for them. Sexual and gender-based violence occur more frequently in high-risk conflicts. Hence, it is reasonable to deduce that operations focused on protecting civilians would be enhanced by increasing the number of women in leadership roles. Contrary to popular belief, the contrary is true. Based on the ongoing study on gender balance in peacekeeping operations, which is now in its preliminary phase due to limited data, there is a greater likelihood of deploying female military and police officers to missions with reduced dangers or in conflict zones. Nevertheless, those places do not have the highest demand for them. Sexual and gender-based violence occur more frequently in high-risk conflicts. Hence, it is reasonable to deduce that operations focused on protecting civilians would be enhanced by increasing the number of women in leadership roles. Contrary to popular belief, the contrary is true. Nevertheless, what about the issue of sexual assault and exploitation (SEA)

among peacekeepers themselves? Does increasing the presence of women contribute to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) events during peacekeeping missions? Regrettably, there is no evidence to support this claim. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the proportion of women in the workforce remains alarmingly low, accounting for less than 4% of the entire workforce, and there is no indication of any progress being made in this regard. Due to the scarcity of women participating in UN missions, it is highly unlikely that any discernible positive effects of gender balance can be observed. Even in modern times, peacekeeping operations continue to be environments that exhibit sexism.

There is a scarcity of research that has analyzed the spending behaviours of men and women to determine if they have differing policy preferences. Regrettably, the overwhelming majority of these probes occur in highly industrialized countries. Female politicians are more inclined to advocate for increased funding for public services and environmental conservation. Their objective is to decrease the allocation of funds for military and agricultural activities. Additional research conducted in Sweden suggests that female legislators may prioritize allocating more resources towards child care and education rather than towards the elderly. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these preferences do not necessarily align with the preferences of female voters. Women in underdeveloped nations possess distinct needs and requirements that cannot be adequately captured by research conducted in Switzerland and Sweden. Women, especially those living in rural areas of low-income countries, mainly depend on agriculture as a source of economic autonomy. Access to electricity may have a more positive impact on women engaged in unpaid labor compared to other public goods. The scarcity of evidence on the efficacy of gender-budgeting initiatives in post-conflict states is attributed to the intricate nature of the local context.

### **Experiencing a sense of safety and protection**

Conducting research on sexual assault that takes place during times of conflict is difficult due to the sensitive nature of the subject. Despite a significant shift in the international community's perspective on acknowledging and dealing with the issue, the comprehensive comprehension of the impact of sexual violence on both women and men during times of war is currently hindered by the implicit beliefs held by policy-makers, practitioners, and academics. However, there has been a significant change in the international community's stance towards acknowledging and dealing with the issue. Empirical research has a significant impact in this field, aiding researchers in creating the initial comprehensive collection of data on sexual violence occurring during periods of civil unrest. After conducting a thorough study on sexual assault, they arrived at three main findings, all of which challenge the prevailing beliefs held by policymakers and other influential individuals. Sexual violence has diverse manifestations that are contingent upon the specific war or conflict, including instances that occur throughout its unfolding. Furthermore, the violence that takes place during conflicts deviates from the patterns observed in other types of violence against civilians, rendering the conventional explanations for such violence inadequate. Contrary to popular assumption, there is no empirical evidence to substantiate the notion that sexual violence can be employed as a strategic manoeuvre in times of conflict. Furthermore, although women and girls constitute the vast majority of victims, it is important to acknowledge that sexual assault can also affect individuals of other genders. Sexual violence affects men as well. Contrary to popular notion and assumptions, a greater number of males, including both men and boys, are the intended targets. From the standpoint of the judicial system, sexual assault is no longer seen as a "silent crime."

The extensive focus on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) committed by peacekeepers against vulnerable local populations in both scholarly research and media coverage may be surprising, but it is important to note that sexual violence during times of conflict can influence the decision-making of the Security Council.

Preliminary efforts to assess the extent of SEA in missions have revealed substantial disparity among those flights. Severe acute respiratory sickness (SEA) that occurs during operations has the capacity to impact both military and civilian people. Nevertheless, the emphasis on SEA fails to acknowledge the significantly more widespread issue of transactional sex exploitation. The presence of peacekeepers in a country increases the likelihood that vulnerable women would form transactional relationships with humanitarian workers and peacekeepers. In the long run, this could potentially impede progress in promoting sustainable development and empowering women.

### **Conversation**

There is a clear lack in the current discussion on political economy as a field when it comes to addressing gender-specific issues and the participation of women in the political economy of health in situations including humanitarianism and ongoing conflicts.

Although the relationship between health, political economy, and gender in conflict-ridden environments is intricate, there is a lack of scholarly research, particularly empirical case studies, that expressly examine this association. This statement holds especially true when considering the relationship between gender and the

political economy. The scarcity of considerable empirical evidence further complicates the situation regarding the basis for more sophisticated theoretical methods in this sector. This exacerbates the situation even further.

There has been a lack of scholarly focus on studying the socioeconomic impacts of health in conflict settings, such as its influence on the livelihoods of both men and women, the availability of healthcare facilities, and the behavior of seeking healthcare. For example, its influence on the livelihoods of individuals, both male and female, in areas affected by violence. Significant scholarly attention has been focused on the topic of the characteristics and feasibility of a gendered political economy of health.

It is important to mention that most of the research on these concepts focuses on post-conflict situations rather than settings currently experiencing active conflict with ongoing gender-related tensions and humanitarian consequences. This research examines how these concepts are put into practice in environments affected by war. This characteristic becomes more remarkable when it is considered.

This narrative review focuses on three key issues that have the potential to serve as the foundation for further study and policy changes. Gender-inclusive approaches in practical settings can be facilitated by various topics that align with initiatives such as national action plans, the promotion of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (and related resolutions), the Humanitarian Grand Bargain, the Women Leaders in Health and Conflict Initiative, and other benchmarks for gender equality.

Firstly, it is crucial to embrace a gendered political economy framework that clarifies how entrenched power hierarchies and persistent patriarchy impede progress towards gender equality and equity in areas impacted by violence. War has extensive ramifications, such as the disruption of healthcare systems and adverse health consequences, particularly for women. The assertions have been scrupulously documented and are substantiated by the evidence. Within the context of a gendered political economy, academics and policymakers possess the essential means to surpass superficial discussions regarding global efforts towards achieving gender equality. Alternatively, they might support the allocation of resources to initiatives that are grounded in reliable evidence and recognize and promote the active participation of women in healthcare during periods of conflict.

Moreover, there is abundant data to demonstrate the unequal and excessive suffering endured by women as a result of the lack of healthcare services, economic disruptions, and forced relocations caused by conflicts, along with other negative outcomes. Due to the traditional gender roles that assign women with more obligations in their houses and communities, women may face increased vulnerability during times of crisis. This is a result of the traditional assignment of jobs based on gender, which places heavier burdens on women.

This gendered dynamic is pervasive in both public services and markets, so reinforcing the subservient and dependent roles that women occupy inside the household. The underrepresentation of women in the work market and their relatively lower wages are two factors that hinder women's ability to have a significant impact on the decision-making process about their healthcare and access to services. Amidst times of conflict, the burden of providing care for others, typically borne by women, results in an increase in death rates and a steady deterioration in the general welfare of women and girls.

There is a correlation between armed conflict and a reduction in the accessibility of essential healthcare services, such as prenatal care and competent delivery attendance. These variables contribute to a rise in maternal death rates. Both obtaining antenatal treatment and having skilled attendance during childbirth are factors that contribute to a higher occurrence of maternal death. Consequently, the lack of proper functioning healthcare systems exacerbates the vulnerability of women and children to the socioeconomic instability brought about by conflict. Political economy research should employ gender-inclusive methodologies to examine the specific barriers within the healthcare resource ecosystem in order to effectively tackle these difficulties.

## Conclusion

The field of gender, conflict, and peace is a developing subfield that seeks to integrate into the mainstream. The region has made a significant and remarkable contribution by specifically studying the gender dynamics in peace and conflict processes that go beyond traditional institutional frameworks. There is compelling empirical evidence that demonstrates that gender parity is an unequivocal indicator of development and societal maturity. However, the available data on the best effective policies and practices is more complex than commonly thought. Therefore, further investigation is necessary, and the discipline is responsible for advancing and developing definitive conclusions regarding efficient and inefficient approaches. Feminist research has broadened the definition of insecurity to encompass not just formal declarations of war and peace, but also the intricate dynamics of everyday life that intersect with different social identities. This statement acknowledges the intricate mechanisms by which gender is constructed, enacted, maintained, and controlled

in environments impacted by conflict or heightened security. Furthermore, it highlights the continuous range of violence that goes beyond periods of warfare. Research has indicated that the concepts of security and insecurity are intricately linked to gendered emotions, language, culture, and affect. This is especially relevant to techniques that depend on established frameworks of masculinity and gender for understanding. The relationship between gender and security is crucial in influencing the comprehension of security and peace in policy, research, and practice.

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