GENDER-SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONFLICT, CRISES, AND MITIGATION EFFORTS

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Introduction

It is commonly observed that the nature of armed conflict has changed since the end of WWII, and even more since the end of the Cold War, with civilians more targeted for human rights abuses than in the past. International humanitarian law has addressed this by strengthening civilians' expectations of justice, redress, and non-repetition. The focus on protection of and justice for civilians has provided crucial entry-points for gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution and recovery.

Gender relations shape the impact of conflict on civilians but also the ways that decisions are made about conflict prevention and resolution, and even the way hostilities are prosecuted. Beyond the protection of civilians development in international law, other shifts in international peace and security, such as awareness of social, economic and environmental dynamics that can trigger conflict, have contributed to awareness of the extent to which gender inequality and in particular levels of violence against women can signal national propensities for violent dispute resolution. Other developments that affect women's engagement with and experiences of war include: the shrinking of state capacities for economic regulation and public service provision; technological change including drone warfare and the spread of communication technologies, economic globalization linking remote mining operations to global markets, and demographic shifts towards youth-dominant populations. Women's experiences of emergencies and humanitarian crises -which are increasingly linked to conflict– are likewise affected by these developments.

As a general rule, local gender relations shape women's autonomy, mobility, physical security, and access to physical, social and political resources. These factors (as well as race, class, ethnicity, and age) shape the roles women play in prosecuting conflict or promoting peace, their capacity to evade bodily harm and protect assets, and their specific political interests and practical survival strategies post-conflict. The following list elaborates on some striking gender-specific features of current trends in armed conflict and in conflict resolution and recovery.

Inclusion of gender-related crimes in the Security Council's interpretation of IHL

The Security Council has in the last 20 years moved towards stronger enforcement of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This has invoked tensions between universal obligations and responsibilities versus the principle of national sovereignty and the interests defended by decisions to prosecute war crimes or to tolerate impunity. Key Council decisions have opened significant advances in IHL, such as the 1992 decision to equate impunity for mass crimes with threats to peace and security. This led to the resolutions to set up the tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in 1993–1994. The proposal for the tribunal for former Yugoslavia listed rape as a crime against humanity and included the suggestion that women be represented in the ranks of judges and prosecutors. In 2002 the Council became part of the ICC/UN Agreement which deepened the goal of ending impunity and recognized previously neglected gender-based crimes as crimes of international significance requiring Council action. The ICC's work has strengthened

jurisprudence on gender-related crimes under international law in relation to the crime of sexual violence as well as a range of other war crimes that either target women and girls specifically or that affect them differently from men and boys.

IHL requires states to support efforts to prevent injustices before they occur. States' obligations to prevent human rights atrocities increasingly include addressing systemic issues such as women's inequality. Adopted in 2000, Security Council resolution 1325 reinforces this logic. It asserts criminal accountability for gender crimes, and also recommends building gender equality through women's inclusion in international and national conflict prevention and recovery institutions including national governance.

There is growing evidence of the strong relationship between levels of violence against women and internal instability as well as national propensities to turn to violence in responding to crises in relations with neighboring states.[1] While resolution 1325 signals acceptance of the relationship between women's empowerment and national security, considerable confusion continues to exist over the Council's precise responsibilities with regard to women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Human Security/Developmental Threats

The 1992 heads of state Security Council summit signaled a shift in approach by recognizing that "non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to peace and security."[2] Understanding scarcity and resource depletion as security threats has resonated with feminist approaches to security as a social condition including justice and equality, not just the absence of armed hostilities. The human security approach has not gained traction in international security institutions because it is simply too broad to be actionable; however there is strong interest among some Council members to expand attention to conflict triggers such as inequality or environmental strain. On the other hand, Russia and China and non-aligned Security Council members regularly note that thematic concerns such as women, children, refugees, terrorism, and climate change/natural resource scarcity might better be addressed in other forums that handle development issues (the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, Economic and Social Council) or human rights issues (Human Rights Council). The proper scope of the Council in relation to raising the alarm about potential security threats emanating from mounting inequality, poverty, environmental stresses and the like is still to be determined. In this sense the Council's commitments on women's empowerment and rights are in the vanguard of potential future directions. Resolution 1889 (2009) is notable in raising a range of developmental concerns (women's decision-making power, health and education) as matters of significance for conflict prevention and recovery and in strongly linking gender equality to the Council's long-term (but ambivalent) relationship to peacebuilding and to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

Protection and participation: A bias towards protection, particularly in relation to sexual violence

In 1999, the Council deemed protecting civilians in armed conflict to be essential to maintaining peace and security and subsequently passed a series of thematic resolutions addressing the protection challenges facing children, refugees, and women. The most revolutionary advance in building global obligations to protect civilians is the Responsibility to Protect doctrine as reflected in the report of the 2005 World Summit. However, there has been little progress by the Council or UN peacekeepers in anticipating or preventing serious threats on the ground against civilians. The credibility and practical viability of the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine has been damaged because it is perceived as having been manipulated to provide a front for regime change in 2011 in Libya. The 'R2P' doctrine was already viewed with suspicion by many states (mainly in the G77 camp) because of the way it threatens national sovereignty

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[1] Valerie Hudson et al. 2012. Sex and World Peace, Columbia University Press.
[2] UNSC 1992, cited in Laura Shepherd. See also Malone 2000 and Holt and Taylor, 2009, chapter 2.

without strong constraints on its application, but the Libya experience has been a setback in the application of notions of universal responsibility to civilians in need of protection.

Four Security Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict (1820 [2009]; 1889 [2009]; 1960 [2010] and 2106 [2013]) indicate profound determination by the Council to end the use of sexual violence as a method of prosecuting military and political objectives. International attention to sexual violence in conflict is significant and unprecedented, evident in the UK's former foreign secretary William Hague's success in putting the issue on the G8's agenda in 2013 and in assembling almost 80 foreign ministers in 2014 to address the issue. Framing sexual violence as wartime strategy, part of the arsenal of prohibited military techniques, and an international crime, however, has had consequences for the 'participation' elements of the Council's responsibilities. Some Council members have been uncomfortable with the notion that the Council should promote women's participation in peace-making and peacebuilding, seeing this as a form of political interference. This view, however, denies the extent to which Council engagement in any conflict situation includes the active shaping of domestic interlocutors and parties to conflict in ways that facilitate effective international engagement. While failure to promote women's engagement in conflict resolution and recovery efforts is not an international crime, it does have consequences for the sustainability, broad social buy-in, and inclusiveness of a conflict resolution and recovery process.

Symptomatic of the Council's divided attention to these matters is a sharp divergence noted by analysts such as the NGO 'Security Council Report' in the number, specificity, and follow-up of instructions in mission mandate renewals between the many instructions addressing sexual violence, and the few addressing the wide range of issues relevant to building women's participation and leadership. First, operational instructions relating to gender issues increasingly, often exclusively, focus on addressing sexual violence. Second, when resolutions do in fact mention women's participation as a mission responsibility, concrete instructions as to how to promote participation are noticeably absent.[3]

Normative advances on women's reproductive rights with reference to termination of pregnancies caused by conflict-related sexual violence

In September 2013 the Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council that girls and women raped in armed conflict be provided access to "services for safe termination of pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination and in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law".[4]

In October 2013, resolution 2122 alluded strongly to raped women's rights to access services to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Although the Security Council did not use the term "abortion" in Resolution 2122, its language makes clear that Member States and the UN must ensure that all options are given to women impregnated by war rape: "noting the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination." (UNSCR 2122).

There is growing support among legal experts that deliberately omitting the option of abortion from the medical treatment provided to girls and women raped in war violates their rights, as war victims, to comprehensive, non-discriminatory medical care under the Geneva Conventions.[5] Inclusion of this issue in a Security Council resolution is significant because intergovernmental agreement on this matter has been blocked by concerted conservative coordination in forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women. The Security Council has played an unexpected role as a forum in which to pursue normative advances blocked elsewhere. The advance that this represents in terms of women's reproductive and sexual rights in

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[3] SCR April 2014 Cross-Cutting Report Women Peace and Security, New York
[4] Secretary-General's report on Women and Peace and Security 2013
[5] Global Justice Center, February 2011, 'The Right to an Abortion for Girls and Women Raped in Armed Conflict', GJC Brief, http://globaljusticecenter.net/index.php/publications/briefs-and-white-papers/2-the-right-to-an-abortion-for-girls-and-women-raped-in-armed-conflict-february-2011

this specific conflict-related instance will have to be broadened so that there is no discrepancy at local levels in women's access to medical services needed to terminate pregnancies.

Statebuilding and Rule of Law

In the past decade the work of post-conflict statebuilding has become a distinct policy field with specific gender equality content. Statebuilding which includes investment in security sector reform and rule of law is both an immediate stabilization tool in shifting from patterns of violence and war to democracy and predictable decision-making, and a long-term conflict-prevention investment. The creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and its attendant organs (Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund) in 2005 was in part justified by the need to ensure coherence and results in establishing post-conflict rule of law. The PBC is one of the few intergovernmental institutions that has a mention of gender in its foundational resolution. Within the UN, gender issues are also mentioned in related coherence processes such as the creation of the 2006 Rule of Law Coordination and Resources Group (RoLCRG) as well as the 2007 creation in DPKO of the Office on the Rule of Law and Security Institutions merging several relevant UN components.

This attention to rebuilding the rule of law has provided an important opening to address gender issues in transitional justice and long-term legal and security sector reforms. Beyond ensuring prosecution of conflict-related crimes against women, the rule of law agenda in theory provides for formalizing legal titles to property, equalizing citizenship rights, revising domestic violence and other domestic relations legislation (for instance registering customary marriages), enforcing legal sanctions against trafficking, and modernizing the procedures and evidence rules for prosecuting crimes of sexual violence. In practice, attention to gender issues in rule of law interventions has been uneven.

Neo-liberal approaches to the rule of law may fail women by not fore fronting and defending gender equality in the distribution of entitlements and opportunities, or equal property rights regimes. Market reforms usually involve property rights laws, deregulation of financial and tariff regimes to facilitate open markets internally and internationally. Insufficient attention is paid to women' lack of opportunities to benefit from enterprise credit or marketing opportunities, let alone to property rights. There is a contradiction between expectations of national capacities to enforce laws/combat impunity, and market-led growth strategies that neglect state institutions. When it comes to protecting the rights of women and marginal groups, stronger state capacity to deliver services and administer justice is needed. Efforts to rebuild the public administration tend to reward politically powerful groups with privileged access to public sector jobs. However, hiring greater numbers of women to staff the frontlines of public service delivery would be an important investment in pro-poor services,[6] and would have the added virtue of supporting women's empowerment and visibility in public roles. Measures to accelerate women's access to public decision-making, such as temporary special measures including gender quotas, must be encouraged and applied more consistently in statebuilding processes.

Feminization of refugee and displaced populations

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[6] A range of studies show that the 'feminization' of public service provision is associated with lower corruption and better responses to the needs of female public service users. See for instance Judith Tendler and Sarah Freedheim, 1994, 'Trust in a Rent-Seeking World: Health and Government Transformed in Northeast Brazii' in World Development, Vol. 22, Issue 12; Mcloughlin, C. and Scott, Z. (2014) Service Delivery: Topic Guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. Birmingham.

A sustained period in which numbers of IDPs and refugees fell (2000- 2010) has been followed by a dramatic increase in forced displacement to levels not seen since World War II. By mid-2014 UNHCR was reporting that 51.2 million people were forcibly displaced, 6 million more than the 45.2 million reported in 2012. This significant increase was driven mainly by the war in Syria, which at the end of last year had forced 2.5 million people into becoming refugees and made 6.5 million internally displaced. Other recent mass displacements were triggered by conflicts in Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Women and children compose up to 80% of many refugee populations. Gender ratios amongst IDPs vary more widely. One thing is certain: displaced and refugee women face challenges in coping with large dependency burdens in families inflated by the acquisition of orphaned children and elderly relatives. Women are either excluded from or have little time for participating in camp management and decision-making. Asylum laws rarely include gender-based discrimination as grounds for asylum status. Some of the consequences of the distinctive survival challenges faced by displaced women, particularly when they head households, are early marriage of girls and boys, significant increases in pregnancies of females of reproductive age owing to early marriage and vulnerability to sexual violence, engagement in sex work for survival, including domestic work that includes sex work in host communities. In 29 countries, most of them in the Arab or Muslim world, women lack the right to retain nationality on marriage to foreigners or to pass their own nationality to children born in foreign contexts. Women married to foreigners and children born in contexts of displacement are therefore highly vulnerable and lack the right to claim basic citizenship rights.

The perspectives and priorities of displaced women are not well represented in ceasefire, peace or recovery negotiations and settlements. While most displaced persons prefer return to permanent exile, an under-investigated phenomenon is women's extreme difficulties in recovering shelter and property. Women face heightened difficulties reclaiming property of deceased male providers as this property is often claimed by the man's family. Another under-investigated but urgent problem faced by women is the range of disadvantages caused by a lack of identity and property ownership documentation. A lack of land titles, passports, marriage and birth registration, and other documents limit women's capacities to recover property or participate in political and economic life on return (i.e. registering to vote let alone applying for enterprise development loans), or to survive independently in exile (asserting custodial rights over children, embarking on travel to escape from situations of oppression or violence).

Intervention forces in peacekeeping

With the Mali and DRC missions taking on increasingly interventionist mandates, and AMISOM doing the same in Somalia, international peacekeeping has entered new legal and tactical territory. This has the potential of associating international peacekeepers with the human rights abuses of the domestic security forces that they assist. The objectives of these intervention initiatives are primarily counter-insurgency. To ensure that these measures also improve the security environment for women it is crucial that the concepts of operations involved include clear measures to prevent gender crimes and ensure women's safety, as well as comprehensive mechanisms for civilians to report and receive services and redress for sexual exploitation and abuse committed by international peacekeepers.

Terrorism and counter-terrorism

On the domestic front a number of states invoke the threat of terrorist violence in order to justify the shrinking of civil liberties, notably the right to privacy, free speech, and freedom of conscience, and enact emergency laws in the name of homeland security. This has the potential to constitute a threat to the work of human rights defenders. The misogyny of some violent extremist groups has alerted some security actors to the importance of monitoring levels of violence towards women, as well as other indicators such as higher levels of seclusion, restrictions on physical mobility, restrictions on women's' access to schools and

health facilitates, as potential warning signs of growing extremism. Rhetoric identifying women's rights and freedoms with a buffer against extremism is now heard more frequently from security actors (including the Security Council) and countries that are supporters of conflict resolution in countries affected by religiously inspired extremism.[7] However the instrumentalization of gender equality as a possible counterforce to extremism has not yet received significant investment in comparison with the amounts invested in other aspects of counter-terrorism. Support for gender equality in fragile states is a long-term project that is most effective when it takes the form of institutional (not project-specific) support to women's' civil society organizations (which can build the local legitimacy of women's empowerment claims) –yet this type of support still attracts a very small proportion of international funding to fragile states.

Restrictions on women's mobility, work, and sexuality are explicit and central to the political projects of some contemporary violent extremist groups (particularly those espousing Islamist ideologies). Women's rights are identified as emblematic of the West's resented impositions on the rest of the world. For instance, the extent to which external actors promoted women's rights in contexts such as Iraq or Afghanistan is exaggerated and held up as an example of unwanted cultural interference, and as an excuse for violent reprisals against Western security and civilian targets. While extremist groups in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen have revived archaic approaches to the seclusion of women, it is ISIS in Iraq and Syria that is considered to enact this sexual apartheid most rigorously. This is accompanied by exceptionally cruel and degrading treatment of both non-Muslim women and Muslim women belonging to sects perceived as apostate, such as the Yazidis. Women and girls in these categories have been captured for auction to male combatants as sex slaves or are forced into marriage – a human rights abuse that doubles as a source of revenue. Controls on sexuality extend to harsh condemnation and brutal treatment of homosexuals.

Support for gender equality policy and programming as part of the response to countering extremism has become critical as the nature of extremism has evolved. Today, groups like ISIS and Boko Haram are grounding their violence on an ability to govern and control territory, as well as on their ability to organize crime including drugs and sex trafficking. For example, the magazine 'ISIS' issues appeals for doctors, engineers, and professionals to engage in *hijrah* (devotional migration) in order to assist in the construction of an Islamic government. It lures fighters and supporters, including women, from around the world with sophisticated social media campaigns, and promises of meaningful employment. While military and security operations may halt the advance of these groups, and limit their capabilities, these tools alone cannot address the root causes of their influence or the spread of their radical ideologies. Nor can they build resilient families and communities. Responses to violent extremism across a range of contexts including peace operations must include investing in good governance and sustainable development strategies that include the empowerment and active participation of women.

In non-state armed groups the numbers and visibility of women combatants appears to be growing. It is reported that women were 40% of the Maoist forces in Nepal (though holding relatively low rank) and 40% amongst the FARC in Colombia. From the 'black widows' of Chechnya to the female suicide cadre in Northern Sri Lanka to women making petrol bombs in Northern Ireland, women fighters have been assets to terrorist organizations, and ISIS is currently flaunting its capacity to attract women to its ranks. Women cadres in terrorist groups are effective in part because they can exploit gendered ideologies that dismiss the possibility of women exercising extreme violence. The growing role of women fighters in terrorist groups calls for revision of security and conflict prevention strategies, which may risk overlooking women combatants both when setting up secure environments and in supporting demobilization. The phenomenon of women terrorists also calls for further research and data collection on women's roles in advancing violent extremist ideologies. Approaches to involving women in programmes countering violent extremism have

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[7] For language recognizing the contribution of gender equality and women's' empowerment to countering violent extremism see UN Security Council resolution 2178 OP15, 16 and PRST/2014/21, Para 11.

largely rested on a view of women as 'maternal', engaging with them as mothers or wives of radicals, and exploiting their reproductive role as a means of accessing men targeted under these programmes. As demonstrated, while women are powerful conflict preventers they can also be sympathizers, mobilizers and perpetrators of terrorist and extremist agendas for many of the same reasons that attract men to these causes.

Demographic crises and political volatility:
Youth frustration in the Arab world; Aging populations in South/Western Europe and Japan

The Arab Spring revolutions for regime change and democracy were driven by the most significant youth mobilizations in modern history. North African and Arab states are experiencing a massive demographic crisis not just because a majority of their populations are under the age of 35 (with at least 20% of the population aged between 15 and 29), but because much of this population is caught in a social trap preventing achievement of autonomous adulthood – lacking quality education, viable employment, and the resources to marry and form families. Men marry on average at 31 years in Arab states, later than anywhere else in the world except for China.[8] This leads to sharp resentment and frustration at the sense of being trapped in a state of pre-adulthood in contexts lacking outlets for free expression.

Other contexts with significant youth bulges, sexual repression, and poor employment prospects can expect to see similar instability, particularly where this is accompanied with systematic discrimination against females from birth resulting in a male-biased population ratio (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Northern India). A striking feature of economies in the middle-income Arab states is the low employment-to-population ratio at roughly 45 per cent, indicating that more Arabs of productive age are out of work than in work. The low participation rate is strongly skewed by gender, with fewer than 30% of working age women in the job market.[9] This figure is a warning sign. Research shows that states with 10% women in the labour force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict than are states with 40% women in the labour force.[10]

Advanced post-industrial economies that have not invested adequately in alleviating women's unpaid care burdens are finding women retreating from childbearing, prompting demographic shifts requiring a relaxation of immigration restrictions. Fertility has fallen below replacement rates (of 2.1) in Japan and Southern and Western Europe resulting in an aging population unable to meet care needs let alone deliver a workforce capable of keeping the economy competitive. Immigration controls are relaxing to fill employment vacuums (mostly in the less skilled labor categories). Large immigrant inflows are received with suspicion and some discrimination, triggering in some contexts a social backlash in the form of anti-immigration protests that attract fascist and racist far-right elements such as have been associated with the 'Pegida' group in Germany. Women in these contexts are resisting ethno-nationalist pro-natalist rhetoric because it is not matched with benefits and assurances that women will not suffer a loss of ground in the job market. Consequences of demographic changes thus include not just mounting tensions over immigration, but incipient racist fascist mobilizations with implications for immigration and foreign policy. Radical right wing and fascist mobilizations and religiously-inspired violent extremism have in common a backlash against women's equality and rights. Interestingly, these conservative movements find common ground in the project of pushing back women's rights in intergovernmental forums. For instance in the 2015 Commission on the Status of Women meetings in New York, an unusual cross-section of states that included former Soviet states, states with Islamic or Catholic-inspired governments, along with the Holy

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[8] M. Chloe Muldering, 2013, 'An Uncertain Future: Youth Frustration and the Arab Spring', Pardee Papers No 16, Boston, http://www.bu.edu/pardee/files/2013/04/Pardee-Paper-16.pdf?PDF=pardee-papers-16-arab-spring
[9] ibid.
[10] M. Caprioli, 2005. "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Equality in Predicting Internal Conflict", *International Studies Quarterly,* 49(2), pp. 161–178.

See, joined forces in defending a traditional notion of 'the family' and women's traditional roles within it, to block advances on women's sexual and reproductive rights.[11]

Health-related emergencies (Ebola, cholera)

Women and girls are affected differently than men and boys in emergencies depending upon the way gender roles make them vulnerable to infection or other risks and limit their participation in the response. Hence, the impact of those emergencies must be understood within the larger systemic concerns, including deeply-rooted structural and cultural barriers which drive women's marginalization and their political, economic and social exclusion. For instance, during the cholera outbreak in Haiti in 2011 or the Ebola crisis of late 2014 / early 2015 in West Africa, women's domestic care roles and responsibility for preparing the dead for burial exposed them to high rates of infection from bodily fluids. Yet despite their roles as primary caregivers, they have not been given adequate opportunities to participate in crisis response and recovery strategic planning. This has had a negative impact on effectiveness because of a neglect of the gendered socio-economic consequences of these epidemics. For example, emergencies that require the closure of schools (as was the case with the Ebola crisis) have been accompanied by elevated levels of teenage pregnancy. These gender impacts were not anticipated nor mitigated in the response.

Beyond the immediate priority of saving lives, long term investment is needed to rebuild socio-economic services, including health and education systems with the full participation of women. Key concerns include ensuring women's access to quality maternal and reproductive health services and girls' continued access to schooling. Whether in the case of limited outbreaks such as cholera in Haiti or pandemics such as Ebola in West Africa, strategic interventions are also needed to mitigate the risk of social unrest and conflict related to the socio-economic consequences of thee crises. These interventions should include capitalizing women's role to strengthen social cohesion and confidence-building measures to reestablish civilian trust and engagement with national and local authorities.

Existing women's civic groups, local peace committees, and dialogue forums can play a critical role in stabilization and conflict prevention efforts, providing access to information and public education, trust-and-confidence-building. In addition, some emergencies have opened possibilities of changing gender roles in positive ways or challenging harmful traditional practices. Female genital mutilations and related rites of passage have been suspended completely in Sierra Leone, for instance. This contradicts long-standing claims by traditional authorities that these practices are inevitable and unstoppable and indicates that they are capable of imposing a structural change that could greatly support girls' empowerment if circumstances require.

Organized crime

Structured criminal networks have facilitated or accompanied conflict. For instance, the spread of networks of insurgent and violent extremists across the Sahel has followed and now builds on the pathways of trade

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[11] Belarus, 2015, Statement of the Group of Friends of the Family in New York,
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12348Joint%20statement-friends%20of%20the%20family.pdf

in illegal drugs and conflict minerals. This trade also includes human trafficking and contemporary slavery, in which the exchange of women as sex slaves is a major part. The schoolgirls abducted in March 2014 by the Boko Harm in Chibok Nigeria were rapidly dispersed through these networks. In the Northern Triangle in Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala), organized crime related to the drug trade is mainly responsible for the skyrocketing levels of violence in those countries, with the highest homicide rates in the world. In Honduras, femicide has increased by 93 percent since 2009. This is directly linked to increasing levels of sexual violence and sex trafficking, and the humanitarian crisis provoked by tens of thousands of unaccompanied boys and girls trying to cross the US-Mexico border in 2013 and 2014. Organized crime in fragile states has been significantly facilitated by the shrinking of the state that has accompanied three decades of market-centered reforms. Very little is known about women's engagement as managers and beneficiaries of these networks.

New technologies of warfare and communication

Remote control destruction through the use of drones may have reduced overall numbers of civilian casualties where intelligence is strong but has also generated civilian resentment of external counter-terrorism interventions in contexts such as Afghanistan and Yemen. Civilian casualty figures suggest that women are a minority of civilian victims of these attacks. However, communities suffer from the constant threat of attack from the air and the impact of this sustained insecurity on domestic relations, violence against women and children, and the social fabric has not been assessed. Outside of these counter-terrorist attacks, technologies employed in contemporary warfare are either conventional or even primitive. A ground-to-air missile felled a civilian airliner in Ukraine, for instance. Chemical weapons and barrel bombs stuffed with shrapnel and explosives have been used to inflict maximum civilian casualties in Syria.

As protection and conflict early warning measures, women have been given cell phones and radios in some contexts; however these remain relatively limited experiments and their impact in improving the security of women civilians has not been assessed. For example, anecdotal evidence indicates that, in community alert networks set up by the UN in DRC, despite efforts to give these cell phones to women, they often end up in the hands of the (male) village chief.

War correspondents have paid increasing attention to the impact of conflict on women and the engagement of women as active combatants and decision-makers. For example, exceptional reporting on sexual violence in Darfur and DRC in 2007 is credited with changing perspectives of Security Council members on innovative approaches to preventing sexual violence against civilians. [12]

Evolving 'gender architecture' in conflict situations

There is no adequate UN institutional architecture on the ground in conflict situations that can provide gender-sensitive conflict early warning, support women's engagement in conflict resolution, finance and deliver adequate immediate and long-term recovery services to women and girls affected by conflict, or deliver to the Security Council adequate intelligence about women's roles in conflict and capacities to prevent it. UN Women's field office network does not cover all fragile states and it is absent in crucial contexts such as Libya, Yemen, CAR, Syria, and Ukraine. Other UN agencies attempt to fill the gaps. Within UN missions there are Gender Advisors and Women Protection Advisors, the latter with an explicit mandate to report on levels of sexual violence against civilians. Gender Advisors often lack either the access to senior leaders, or the numbers, placement in relevant technical areas, and seniority in the mission to contribute to decision-making on political and civil affairs, and do not have access to the intelligence needed

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[12] For instance the New York Times reporter Jeffrey Gettleman and the columnist Nick Kristoff are credited with raising awareness of conflict-related sexual violence in their 2007 and 2008 articles.

to ensure the Security Council has relevant information on women's political and security activity to build into mandate renewals. Significant reform to this 'architecture' is needed so that it delivers responses on the ground and actionable information to security decision-makers. The creation of UN Women had the potential to address some of the incoherence and flimsiness of the gender architecture on the ground. However, a serious shortfall in expected resources for UN Women has postponed significant development of country presence and coordination capacity in conflict situations.