CONJUGAL SLAVERY IN WAR (CSiW) PARTNERSHIP

# POLICY BRIEF 1.2

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# MASCULINITIES + WPS

**About the Series**

Forward Looking Strategies in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Policy Brief Series maps new policy priorities in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25) and the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 in 2020. The series will examine the WPS agenda in relation to men and boys as victims of sexual violence; men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality; masculinities; children born of war; disabilities, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

**About the Author**

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## Summary


- This policy brief (1.2) examines why masculinities matter to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It identifies UNSC resolutions that reference men and boys and provides a review of the literature on masculinities and wartime.
- Masculinities refer to norms and expectations of what it means to be a man. Gender norms are socially constructed, contextually ascribed and shaped by power dynamics that are flux, overlapping and change over time and space.
- The brief outlines different concepts of masculinities: hegemonic, militarized, chameleon, thwarted, and peaceful.
- Masculinities are not articulated in the WPS agenda, although men and boys are represented both explicitly (as policymakers, diplomats, etc.) and implicitly (as perpetrators of violence as well as secondary victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and allies in the promotion of gender equality).
- Masculinities matter to the WPS agenda for how they (re)produce militarism and render men and women vulnerable to gender specific harms. Patriarchal gender norms, combined with other global structures such as capitalism, racism, and coloniality, play a role in causing, or at least normalizing and legitimizing, militarism and war. To dismantle militarism is to challenge what is considered an ideal masculine identity in wartime, and/or eradicating hierarchies of value between and among masculinities and femininities.


## Masculinities in WPS Resolutions

UNSCR 1325 (2000) recognizes the importance of distinguishing between sex, which is a biological fact, and gender, which is a social construct. Article 12 states, "Gender must be understood from the perspective of social relations based on sex. It involves roles, responsibilities, aptitudes, behaviours and perceptions that have been shaped by society and specifically assigned to men and women" (UNSCR 1325, 2000). The resolution further

recognizes that during a crisis, these roles, responsibilities, aptitudes, behaviours and perceptions are reproduced and reinforced.

> *During a crisis, the stereotypes and myths of male and female identity are reproduced and reinforced.* ***Masculinity*** *radically asserts itself in the form of violence, control and domination. Women are subject to the same constraints related to their lower status, while their situation as displaced persons or refugees brings other challenges and forces them to carry the major socio-economic burden of the crisis.*
>
> Article 44, UNSCR 1325

Other than this recognition, the WPS agenda has not explicitly referenced to nor engaged masculine gender expression and related cultures of violence. The WPS agenda reproduces the perception that all conflict related to violence is committed by men, without necessarily analyzing what masculinities have to do with reproducing violence (Duriesmith, D., 2017). There have been three references to men and boys in WPS resolutions:

**Resolution 2106 (2013)** recognizes that men and boys can be *secondary victims* as forced witnesses of sexual violence against family members and calls upon men and boys to become allies in efforts to combat all forms of violence against women in armed-conflict situations.

**Resolution 2242 (2015)** emphasizes the *importance of engaging men and boys* as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict.

**Resolution 2467 (2019)** recognizes for the first time that *men and boys are targets of sexual violence* in conflict and post-conflict settings, including in the context of detention. It urges member states to protect victims who are men and boys through the strengthening of policies that offer appropriate responses to male survivors and challenge cultural assumptions about male invulnerability to such violence.

To better understand what gender relations and masculinities have to do with perpetuating gender-related harms in wartime, and/or generating violent conflict, the next section highlights how masculinities have been conceptualized in the literature on gender and armed conflict.

## Literature Review

Post-1990s, emerging scholarship on masculinities and war sought to explain the nexus between state militaries and gender orders, the legitimization of war, and why men fight/are violent in war (Parpart, J., 2015). Consequent frameworks propose that masculinity and war are linked institutionally and intentionally in order to valorize gender specific behaviours, attitudes, and value systems associated with an ideal masculine identity (Hutchings, K., 2008). Such identities are constructed in a way that reifies patriarchy, violence, and toxicity (Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W., 2005). Such a problematic legitimization of patriarchy is embodied in hegemonic masculinity (Connell, R. W., 1998).

**About the CSIW Partnership**

'Conjugal Slavery in War (CSiW): A partnership for the study of enslavement, marriage, and masculinities' is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership Grant (SSHRC PG). The partnership documents cases of so-called forced marriage in conflict situations, places this data in historical context, and examines the international prosecution of crimes against humanity as well as local reparations programs for survivors of violence. With the central participation of community-based organizations in Africa, this project will strengthen individual's and organizations' capacity to prevent violence, and advance understanding of the use of conjugal slavery as a tool of war through evidence-based research.

The CSiW partnership, of which the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia (UBC) is a partner, consists of an interdisciplinary team of researchers and partners who explore the social and legal meaning of conjugal slavery or servile marriage in times of war and the implications of this gender violence in post-conflict situations. Through archival, qualitative, and legal research this Partnership explores the experiences of men and women who were subject to or participated in enslavement in the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Uganda.

## Hegemonic Masculinities

As a concept, hegemonic masculinity seeks to explain the domination of men over women, as well as other men, through the reproduction of gender hierarchies and structural inequalities (Duncanson, C., 2015; Wyrod, R., 2008; Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017). Different ideals of what it means to be a man are valued differently, reproducing this hierarchy and structural inequalities. (Alison, M., 2007; Duriesmith, D. and Ismail, N. H., 2019). Hegemonic masculinities are often idealized as aggressive, stoic and authoritative; any deviations from the ideal are socially, economically and politically subordinated (Atherton, S., 2009; Duncanson, C., 2015). Thus, by undermining men's lived experiences of their own masculinity, the hegemonic model obscures spaces for alternative masculinities to be expressed or recognized (Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017; Dolan, C., 2009; Theidon, K., 2009).

## Militarized Masculinities

Militarized masculinity is a construction of masculinity specific to war contexts. It entails "a set of beliefs, practices and attributes that can enable individuals – men and women – to claim authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideas" (Friðriksdóttir 2018, 6-7). The legitimation of violence is at the heart of this masculinity (Belkin, A. and Carver, T., 2012). It combines hyper-masculine traits and attitudes associated with military soldiers to reconstruct masculinities to be "manlier" (Lopes, H., 2011). This includes being strong, tough, stoic, violent, aggressive, warrior-like, courageous, controlling, and dominant (Eichler, M., 2014). Correspondingly, the core belief of militarized masculinities is reified, i.e. men can be taught manhood through military service or action (Lopes, H., 2011). Hence, the "renunciation" (Zalewski, M., 2017, 200) of feminine traits and behaviours is central to embodying militarized masculinity.

> *There is a weak connection between ideas of what makes a good soldier on the one hand and manhood in civilian life on the other.*
>
> Friðriksdóttir, G. S., 2018: 1

Critical approaches to military studies regard militarized masculinities as a more fluid process of exchange between militarization and masculine socialization. According to such scholarship, masculinities are products of gender binary attachments. However, other scholars believe that this approach would benefit from an elaboration on additional forms of gendered violence that underline military mechanisms (Zalewski, M., 2017). Claiming that men's use of violence is "[an] unintentional by product of […] male sex roles and military culture" (Henry, M., 2017, 188) suggests an approach towards discussions of masculinities in war that fails to consider the characteristic appearance and origins of militarized masculinities (Henry, M., 2017). Consequently, discussions regarding militarized masculinities paint an underdeveloped, wanting, and destructive picture of masculinities in war (Haugbolle S., 2012).

**Chameleon Masculinities**

A more nuanced conceptualization of militarized masculinity is the concept of chameleon masculinity, or the capacity of soldiers to quickly switch from one expected masculine ideal to another according the military context demanded from a soldier. It is contextualized by the examination of so called "humanitarian interventions" in which foreign militaries are present to 'stabilize' hostilities. Chameleon masculinity is thus described as "…a specialized form of operational and tactical military agency […] developed within the body of the military stabilization operative. […] [It manifests] through carefully honed masculine performances and practices tailored to different audiences and environments[.] […] [It aims to influence] military personnel and civilians to fulfil […] [the] political aims of 'population-centred' counterinsurgency and stabilization" (Greenwood, L., 2016, 87). Thus, it exemplifies a 'soldier-scholar' adaptation of military agency: men embody negotiations between situations of varying importance by learning to constantly switch between a 'soldier head' and a 'stabilization head'. In essence, 'soldier head' means having a "full-time situational awareness […] [and being] an asset [not a liability] to the real fighting troops" (Greenwood, L., 2016, 91). Meanwhile, 'stabilization head' means knowing when to relate to the civilian populations with direct violence as opposed to 'armed social work' (Greenwood, L., 2016, 91-92). This reflects the degree to which political, gender, and emotional factors manipulate wartime conditions.

**Thwarted Masculinities**

More recently, scholars have begun to examine the implications of not fulfilling the gender expectations associated with being a 'man'. Thwarted masculinities thus refer to the "expectations of living up to dominant notions of masculinity in the face of realities which make it practically impossible to achieve these[.] [This leads] to frustration and at times various forms of violence, against both others and oneself." (Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017, 108) Men usually experience wartime in contradictory and unequal ways. This is due to the marginalization of vulnerable masculine identities and the displacement of power by hegemonic and militarized masculinities (Henry, M., 2017). Hence, when the norm reveals a majority of men failing to exemplify aggressive masculine ideals, it is important to ask, which 'thwarted' masculine identities do majority of men actually embody?

> *Considering the overwhelming role men play in producing and reproducing conflict-related and other forms of violence, a better understanding of the links between masculinities and violence – as well as non-violence – should be central to examining gender, conflict, and peace. Nonetheless, currently a large part of masculinities is side-lined in research, such as those of non-combatants or displaced persons, the associated challenges of 'thwarted masculinities', or the positive agency of peacebuilders. Non-heterosexual masculinities also are largely invisible.*
>
> Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017: 103

Given the above discussions on the four major war-related masculinities, one can conclude that masculinities are "[complex,] multifaceted[,] […] competing, contradictory, and mutually undermining" (Tapscott, R., 2018, 5119-5121). Nevertheless, most research on masculinities in wartime has sidelined or ignored masculinities associated with non-combatants, displaced individuals, and peacebuilders. This is because the discourse is narrowly centred around "men's 'innate' propensity to violence or […] [masculinity frameworks that fail to contextualize them]" (Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017, 103). It is important to recognize that militarization creates an active military identity only in contrast to a passive, non-militarized civilian identity. This raises awareness about the extent of neglected but crucial alternative masculinities. These 'thwarted' masculinities are found in "the networks of discursive, financial, material, and emotional assemblages that constitute the social world in which war becomes possible" (Bulmer, S. and Eichler, M., 2017, 171).

**Peaceful Masculinities**

Barring a few exceptions, the study of peaceful masculinities in war is absent. Joanna Tidy's offers a concept of peaceful paternal masculinities in global politics. This type of masculinity recognizes that men are as much proponents of peace as they are of war. This is owing to the demonstratively nurturant hegemony of their identities as fathers (Tidy, J., 2018). Another area of research explores ex-combatants' aspirations to lead settled, peaceful lives post-conflict and associated challenges. Some of these obstacles emerge from the stigmatization of their combatant past, local resistance to reintegration, inability to secure employment, and conflict-induced poverty. For instance, former male combatants in Burundi believed that their experiences of soldiering hindered their ability to achieve manhood (Friðriksdóttir, G. S., 2018). Hence, such research illuminates the negative causal relationship between military experience and masculinity. In that process, it also emphasizes the key factors to achieving manhood: marriage, socioeconomic status, ability to provide and protect, fathering children, and creating domestic stability (Friðriksdóttir, G. S., 2018; Mehus, C., et al., 2018; Myrttinen, H., Khattab, L. and Naujoks, J., 2017).

> *I had a lot of hope for the children, I was happy when any child was with me. I would see them as the outcome of my life. We did not have hopes for our lives, at least for the children, they were being protected and guarded. …fought a lot of battles to protect the children and girls.*
>
> Demobilized soldier, Gulu District, Uganda

In this discussion, we considered 'paternal' masculinities in wartime as nurturing, caring, responsible, and peaceful identities. We understand that such masculinities are part of patriarchal familial units, in which men perform a series of roles designed to promote the wellbeing of the family. This becomes relevant in war wherein these forms of masculinity are not exclusive to war or the military but imbricated within. The delineation between civilian (only and ever peace) and combatant (only and ever violent), and in war and post-war is a false binary.

## Policy Implications

- Hegemonic and militarized forms of masculinity actively punish, exclude, and erase alternative masculinities. Not all men are the same, and masculine identities intersect with race, sexuality, class or ability. Learning about men's gender expression as dynamic lends valuable insight into the distribution of power across genders.
- Thus far, research on ways to challenge gender inequality within specific political frameworks is lacking; this includes engaging with militarized conceptions of masculinities in conflict prevention.
- When a policy measure empowers women at the cost of displacing men's power in traditional areas of dominance (like the household), it is crucial to consider whether the resultant creation of gender insecurity will lead to fierce societal backlash against the responsible policy.
- Incorporating a masculinities perspective into the WPS agenda and peacebuilding policy can uncover the gendered roots of armed conflict and redefine peace and security from a holistic gender perspective.
- This entails creating policies that effectively support women *and* men, acknowledging the impact of societal constructions of masculinity on men as elusive to most.

## To cite

CSiW. "Masculinities and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" by Divija Madhani (Policy Brief 1.2, May 2020) as part of *Forward-Looking Strategies in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Policy Brief Series*.

## Of related interest

CSiW. "Locating Men and Boys in WPS Resolutions" by Alessia Rodríguez (Policy Brief 1.1, December 2019) as part of *Forward-Looking Strategies in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Policy Brief Series*.

CSiW. "Mapping the Development of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" by Alessia Rodríguez (October 2019).

Talk by Professor Brandon Hamber on "Masculinities and WPS" as part of a seminar hosted by Ulster University Transitional Justice Institute (TJI). https://www.ulster.ac.uk/transitional-justice-institute/events/masculinities-and-wps

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