

## ENTANGLED IN THE CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE: HOW DO WOMEN EXPERIENCE WAR?

Srđan T. KORAC<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The paper illuminates several issues that arise from the lack of or extensive marginalisation of the female wartime experiences as a relevant debate topic in International Relations (IR) of the day. The analysis is positioned in feminist IR theories and gender studies of war and centres around the notion of continuum of violence as an optimal conceptual tool to embrace the complexities of interactions between women's agency in war and their pervasive victimisation. By employing the concept of continuum of violence, two intertwined planes of female war experiences are examined: the experiences of knowing war and the experiences of doing war. The author concludes that, despite the representational power of the corporate and social media in conveying images of reality to an ever-widening public, wartime experiences of women continue to be blurred and devalued in contrast to glorification of masculine ideal of male hero. Women's experiences of war are officially acknowledged only if they fit the patriarchal order and dominant narratives on the state in international relations, not if they challenge gendered discursive practices. The gender stereotyping of women as "natural" non-combatants reproduces marginalisation of female experiences in doing war as female soldiers are either silenced after conflict or labelled as deviants.

*Key words:* war; continuum of violence; femininity; masculinity; gender politics; feminist theories of international relations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Political Studies, Belgrade. E-mail: [srdjan.korac@ips.ac.rs](mailto:srdjan.korac@ips.ac.rs), [srdjankorac@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:srdjankorac@yahoo.co.uk), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0722-6419>.

The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the 2022 Research Plan of the Institute of Political Studies in Belgrade, and financed by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

## CONCEPTUALISATION OF WAR AS GENDERED EXPERIENCE

War as a social practice has mirrored gender roles embedded in society since ancient times. In epic-toned poetry, literature, and visual arts, men have been celebrated as agents of heroic deeds, while women have been depicted as non-violent, passive victims caught unwillingly in the whirlwind of war tempest. With media reporting backed by instantaneous digital communication and the strength of social media, greater opportunities for manipulation and disinformation have started contributing double victimisation of women in today's armed conflicts. The ongoing war in Ukraine brings a fresh but sinister example of recent trend. A photo of heavily pregnant woman, Marianna Vyshemirsky, taken by an Associated Press reporter at the moment when she was fleeing a bombed maternity hospital in the aftermath of a Russian airstrike in Mariupol, became the subject of controversy, and ended in an extensive online abuse (*BBC Trending 2022*). As a part of information battle, the Kremlin falsely accused Marianna of being involved in the Ukrainian propaganda effort to distort war reality by presenting staged scenes, grounding this claim on the fact that she is a beauty blogger, and, thus, capable of acting and making up fake injuries (*BBC Trending 2022*). The accusation against Marianna had been broadcasted repeatedly on dozens of television channels and Telegram, which provoked an avalanche of death threats she received on social media (*BBC Trending 2022*).

The reason this news story caught my eye was that it symbolises something I hold it is worth to highlight: the continuum of violence in which women are being entangled, and which sharply underlines reproduction of strong gender stereotyping of war experience. Lived war experience of men seems to be more analysed, valued, and talked about than women's; in other words, it becomes more trustworthy. Besides, I appreciate how this news story pinpoints the significance of the commoners' perspective in the analysis of international relations. This perspective is either missing or marginalised in debates within the IR discipline. The mainstream scientific description and explanation of international relations see war as a fundamental pattern of the state behaviour driven by the quest for power and domination aimed at providing superior access to resources (Thayer 2004). Sovereign states are the leading, if not the only actors relevant for analysis of the reality of international relations (see Aron 2017; Lebow 2010; Waltz 2001; Waltz 1979). War is therefore considered a social phenomenon that can be properly understood and scientifically explained on the level of system/structure. This is the epistemological cornerstone of the Realist school of thought in the discipline of IR, drawing on the positivist paradigm that social phenomena and processes can be explained by use of the same methods as those used for natural world, and that facts can be clearly differentiated from values (see Lišanin 2017; Johnson and Duffy Toft 2013–14; Elman 2007, 11–20; Spegele 1996, 22–50; Neufeld 1995, 32–38).

The (neo)realist worldview implies that conflict is a human universal, i.e. disorder is a “primordial” state of humankind. Whether this epistemological stance is being valid or not, warfare embraces much wider layers of social practices related to the condition of hostility (Bousquet 2016, 94), and it penetrates far deeper into social tissue than it is manifested by political and military actions. This is an outcome of the changed nature of warfare in the post-Cold War era with ever more elusive boundary between the combat zone and the rear, the situation in which violence – as the deliberate infliction of harm on people – has not been targeting only soldiers as the traditional agents of violence, but civilians as well (Lawrence and Chenoweth 2010, 2).

A century ago, the world wars overshadowed the fruits of civic culture and civilisation, bringing into everyday life and collective memory violence of hitherto unimaginable encroachment and depth of penetration into privacy. In words of Jan Patočka, the discomfort and pressure of the experience of facing death at the frontline made war an escape from the everyday to the orgiastic, but in the 20th century it has just become an everyday, normal state of existence in whose service the threat of death now lies to encourage life itself, as a guide for soul and body (1996, 119–137). By living in the shadow of the constant threat of death, war normalises what refuses to be normalised, which *per se* could never be affirmation of life. James Dodd problematises violence not only as a possibility but also reality; this reality is imperceptibly woven into social practice as a legacy passed down from generation to generation via socialisation process, and which, hidden behind the external normalcy of peacetime life, always threatens to disrupt the event horizon (Dodd 2009, 140–144). Although in contemporary Western societies warfare begin to be perceived as “something utterly repugnant and futile (...) incomprehensible to the point of absurdity” (Gat 2006, 662), the analysis of international politics in terms of hegemonic masculinity is still not obsolete.

In his influential theory of masculinity, the Australian sociologist Robert W. Connell maintains that masculinity is a cultural construction in the form of a set of social practices that does not exist except in contrast with “femininity” (Connell 2020, 67–71). As the next conceptual step, Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell 2020, 77). Being members of the privileged gender, all men benefit as hegemony constitutes and maintains power relations as “natural” and “normal” (Jindy Pettman 1996, 67). The patriarchal order is “the core of the collective project of hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 2020, 212), so as to masculine violence is legitimised clearly in terms of defending society/family from female delinquency and of fighting for homeland on the global scale (Connell 2020, 213). In a socio-political order rooted in gender essentialism, women are belittled in political process

on the ground of being the natural “home-makers” and “peace-makers”, so to speak, genuine non-combatants neither interested in nor capable of making decisions on war. This protector-protected relationship not only portrays women as dependent on men and state but also obscures victimisation of women in conflict zones – equally by enemy soldiers and their fathers/husbands/brothers (Jindy Pettman 1996, 71). Women are exposed to strict control of men and to “costs of protection” as well, which largely narrows women’s civil rights. Following this line of argumentation, Heeg Maruska identifies the American cultural pattern of hegemonic masculinity, which was transformed in hypermasculinity in the post-9/11 era, as single major contributor to popular support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq (2010, 249).

The perpetual reproduction of the patriarchal order through the socialisation of young generations enables the militarisation of society by restoring the collective memory of past wars through narration, ceremonies, and rituals to shape masculinity and femininity, so that they fulfil the role in war as a collective endeavour (Cockburn 2010). Hegemonic masculinities command the state, including the military. Connell reminds that the Western cultural imagery of the masculine centres around the figure of the hero (2020, 213). The Western idea and standards of heroic masculinity have been affected by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two influential epic poems of the ancient Greece presumably composed and written by Homer. The old Greek aristocratic ideal of heroism was solely attributed to men, because women had no access to the world of warriors. The aristocracy of the day cherished two gender ideals represented in Homer’s literary characters of King Odysseus and his wife Queen Penelope. Vandkilde argues that these two figures signify symmetric gender ideals:

Whereas Odysseus is the cosmopolitan warrior who fights his own and others’ battles, Penelope stays at home and guards the family and its properties (...) A violent, extroverted, masculine cosmopolitan is contrasted with a peaceful feminine counterpart in the domestic sphere. The ideals and roles of the aristocracy spread downwards in society, in that ordinary women typically work as servants in the palaces, while men’s jobs are out in the countryside, even though not primarily in battle. There is, however, a clear division of labour according to gender, originating in and interacting with the contrasting male and female ideals (2006, 522–523).

The problem arises when lived experience of victimised or marginalised groups in war – above all the elderly, women, and children – has been refined subtly through the socially accepted narratives based on dominant notion of heroic masculinity. For instance, individual lived experience of women gets easily absorbed into collective memory not as factual presentation of their real involvement in war events, but primarily to fit the patriarchal order. The female experience of war is transformed so as to become dispersed into marginalised storytelling in the private realm, only to eventually disappear in the widespread culture of hegemonic masculinity.

Once experienced war violence persists within war-torn communities even after formal peace is declared. It seems that violence is or becomes endemic across social strata. Carolyn Nordstrom lucidly points out the ability of violence to “escalate and to insinuate itself into the fabric of everyday life” and debunks the idea that battlefield is a self-contained zone of violence (2004, 68). On the contrary, according to Nordstrom, violence can rather be categorised along a continuum – from necessary to extreme and from civilised to inhumane (2004, 57). She argues further that

(...) the very place researchers choose for studying war is shaped by their notions of what constitutes, and does not constitute, political violence. The people who documented war from its sidelines, pen and paper in hand, went to the sites of military battles. They watched immediate and sometimes immense physical carnage. They were far less likely to trace all the circumstances that led each and every actor to converge on the battlefield; to follow these soldiers as they pursued their lives after the battle. They seldom passed the sites of physical fighting by to document less honorable activities – the profiteering among commanders, the lies and deceits among soldiers, the torture behind closed doors. They documented the heroic and tragic. Nor did they find the lives of the soldiers’ wives, sisters, and daughters as interesting as the lives of the soldiers themselves (...) There remains a tendency to see a soldier shooting at another soldier as constituting war’s violence, while the shooting of a civilian, or the rape of a woman as a soldier returns to the barracks, is seen as peripheral – an accident, an anomaly. The civilian casualty and the rape are understood as different orders of violence situated along a continuum that demarcates both severity and im/morality (Nordstrom 2004, 58).

Violence is reproduced nationally and internationally/globally through the practices of ordinary life – we oftentimes take for granted – that, in turn, shape embodied and informal experience through which disenfranchised populations live their lives stripped out of social power required to re-examine the role of world politics in the production of their own marginality, which all partly result from the gender-based hierarchical oppression (Dixon and Marston 2011; Williams and Massaro 2013). The continuum of violence is not acknowledged in IR mainstream debates nor the political and social meanings of the body, i.e. how those meanings materialise in the international arena. In IR analysis, men and women are routinely abstracted as “cogs” in the grand state mechanism – some sort of avatars with no bodies. Parashar critiques many mainstream IR scholars for being the innocent bystanders who focus their research solely on the causes and consequences of particular wars but intentionally do not spotlight the experiences of ordinary people during the war and in the period between wars (2013, 617–619). In providing a thorough insight, Christine Sylvester elaborates on leaving out the commoners as relevant IR actors:

Ordinary people are overwhelmingly absent in IR because they are not seen as key stakeholders in IR's versions of international relations. My challenge to the field is to pay more attention to war as experience, on two grounds: war cannot be fully apprehended unless it is studied up from people and not only studied down from places that sweep blood, tears and laughter away, or assign those things to some other field to look into; and people demonstrate time and again that they too comprise international relations, especially the relations of war, and cannot therefore be ignored or relegated to a collateral status (Sylvester 2012, 484).

In contrast to the mainstream IR epistemological stance and related knowledge production, a feminist approach shifts the focus from structure to lived and embodied experiences of women as members of marginalised populations in quest for possible connections between different levels of violence. In this paper, I seek to investigate how women's war experiences are developing in the context of deep-rooted social causes of warfare, such as the culture of hegemonic masculinity, the intersections of the public (state, global) and the private/intimate (body, home), and interrelatedness of embodied life practices and abstract/bureaucratic foreign policy projects. In doing so, I will employ the concept of continuum of violence as an optimal conceptual tool to embrace the complexity of interactions between violent wartime actions and victimisation process. In my analysis, I will focus on two intertwined planes of female war experiences: 1) the experiences of knowing war, and 2) the experiences of doing war.

The investigation might be hampered to some extent because storytelling about women's experiences related to warfare are sharply contested on the state/society level through the everlasting clash of competing narratives. The female wartime experience evolves into the acceptable one only if, and as long as, it serves to legitimise the war, strengthens the patriarchal order, and reproduces the identity of the state by negatively stereotyping "others" as enemies. On the contrary, the very same lived experience is effectively silenced by the state when demonstrates the opposing worldview on war, i.e., if disturbs the official narrative of the sacred duty to sacrifice one's life for the homeland. This may be clearly seen in the examples of mothers of soldiers protesting the aggressive foreign policies of the United States, during interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan (*Los Angeles Times* 2005), or Russia, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine (*Newsweek* 2022).

### **EXPERIENCES OF KNOWING WAR: MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN**

For feminist IR theorists, experiencing war by learning empirically about it begins when we acknowledge that "war as an institution depends on gendered images of combatants and civilians" (Sjoberg 2006, 895). The war narrative

reproduces gender hierarchy in such fashion that the man is idealised as just warrior who defend innocent women as “social, biological, and cultural reproducers of nation and nationality”, while the image of woman mirrors a delicate being with beautiful soul worth of fighting war for (Sjöberg and Peet 2011, 176). When it comes to liberal/disciplining wars of the twenty-first century, Wegner (2021) argues that imperialistic objectives of NATO-led interventions have been partly legitimised by promotion of the helpful hero model, a masculine ideal of postmodern soldiering that sanitises illegal/illegitimate violence against local populations of the global periphery. This recently constructed cosmopolitan ideal of masculine but empathetic and gender-sensitive soldier, who risks his life to protect violated bodies and rights of women in the global periphery, seems to fairly contradict questionable on-the-ground achievements of many Western military interventions.

As violence haunts the everyday life in conflict-ridden areas, grasping the experiences of warfare has to include the personal realm of ordinary people, which is devalued with ease in the IR mainstream by the label of banal sentimentality. The emotional level of women’s war experience is in traditional war narratives either marginalised or completely excluded, although it evolves from specific event(s) and/or processes emerging in the international arena. Tyner and Henkin (2015) analyse the gender component of wartime violence through a narrative of the personalised experience of a young Vietnamese physician described in her diary. Tyner and Henkin seek to understand how women articulate their traumatic life experiences (filled with destruction, loss of the loved ones, and enormous pain) and discern the intersectionality of the realm of everyday and the realm of international during long-lasting U.S. intervention. The selected case study reveals the importance of the female war experience in unveiling of the dark, horrible, immoral, and traumatic violent practices in armed conflicts and in depicting the crash of fragile corporeality with abstract military strategy. The descriptions of a lived wartime experience filled with the unbearable stench of dismembered rotting corpses are certainly not convenient for official representations of war one can find in history textbooks and rituals as media of collective memory.

Women experience war at different rhythms than men. They gain understanding of war as a social practice through subordination of their roles to the masculine ones. According to Cockburn, the continuum of violence stems from the imbalance of power in gender relations that the patriarchal order upholds by “syringing doses” of violence into fundamental institutions – such as the family, military, and state – and thus reproduces aggressive behaviour intimately coupled with cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity (2004, 44). For women, war does not qualify as “emergency” or “aberration” nor disruption of the event horizon. It is just a radicalisation of the day-to-day, routinised violence women suffer at home and in the community. Yet the difference is that women in war become a specific target due to the symbolic meaning they carry as members of a nation or ethnic/religious community. The

social value of women is reflected in the biological, social, and cultural role of delivering and nurturing new soldiers who will protect the nation from decay or disappearance. This implies that the body is far more than a fixed and unique part of physical reality: it has historically, plurally and culturally mediated ontological significance as well (Alison 2007, 81). The female perception of war as a part of her lived experience is intricately connected to her body. The female body appears in war conditions as a kind of front line and becomes exposed primarily to sexual victimisation as a means of war strategy. The systematic rape of women – who are oftentimes killed or subsequently die of wounds shortly after being raped many times – aims to sabotage women’s lifetime reproductive capacity and their sacred role as bearers of “genetical material” of their ethnic group (Alison 2007, 78–81).

In a rare attempt to provide a global empirical insight, the 2007 large-scale study conducted by Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces offers a grim glimpse into the obscure anatomy and atrocious proportions of sexual violence in armed conflicts in 51 countries, indicating that it is not a culturally restricted phenomenon but a planetary scourge (Bastick et al. 2007). Pankhurst (2010) systematises four major circumstances that contribute to sexual violence against women in conflict zones. Firstly, mass rape committed in public by a group of soldiers/civilians can be perpetuated as intended act, that is designed as a sinister tool of political and military strategy of enemy state (Pankhurst 2010, 152). The rape as a warring tool also signifies a symbolic attack on men’s ability to protect their wives/sisters and an act of humiliating women as biological embodiment of national pride and identity. Secondly, mass rape is perpetuated to some extent with the perverted idea of military commanders to reward soldiers and inspire the ingroup bonds and favouritism (Pankhurst 2010, 152–153). Thirdly, sexual violence in wartime is eased by loosening of peacetime social constraints, or by their complete removal; men’s sexually violent urges are seen as being biologically driven to such an extent that men have no control over them (Pankhurst 2010, 153–154). Ultimately, sexually violent behaviour is also ascribed to the psychological trauma experienced by men in the childhood or adolescence (Pankhurst 2010, 155). Other theorists of modern warfare see causes of sexual violence in conflict zones in various military, social, and institutional factors. For instance, Asal and Nagel (2021) empirically support correlation between sexual violence of insurgent groups and their methods of establishing and maintaining territorial control, particularly aimed at regulating human, sexual, and reproductive capital and exercising social power over local population.

Pervasiveness of sexual violence denotes the ways along which masculine power is dispersed in social tissue. Disruption of economic and social infrastructure in wartime induces uncertain working conditions and complete dependency on men as income provider and bring about prerequisites for gendered power hierarchies to be enforced more harshly. In such circumstances, a spectrum of violent acts



establishes to reveal the complex dynamics of different modes of violence at different levels (private, communal, society at large, interstate) – modes that not only shade into one another but also reinforce one another. Cynthia Cockburn argues that women associate the continuum of violence with the feeling of being continuously on the front, that is, as if the intimate dimension of their life became “battlefield” – with no clear boundary between war and peace, as well as between preparation for war and post-war hopelessness (2004, 43). The gender component is always present in violence that “flows” unhindered along the entire continuum in such a manner that the identification of time-space points of either initiation or suspension of violent practices is ultimately arbitrary. Krause (2015) emphasises that, judging by the linearity of the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence during conflict, flight, and displacement, the continuum of violence actually stretches beyond combat area. Hyndman (2004) contends that for a woman – already being victimised by sheer fact that she is uprooted from the familiar social surroundings – refugee camps located near the conflict zone are an integral part of the battlefield, because they reproduce gender-based dependence and subordination. Displaced women, usually unaccompanied by their partners or male relatives, now must cope with new power dynamics related to the struggle with hostile locals for distribution of livelihoods and scarce resources provided by humanitarian agencies (Hyndman 2004).

Following Krause’s line of argumentation on the continuum of violence beyond the front, Korać (2017) argues that the UN peacekeeping operations, instead of being an effective tool of maintaining world peace and security, have become source of insecurity itself, because of persistent but largely unsanctioned sexual exploitation and abuse of local women by Blue Helmets. Sex industry quickly rises as an informal sector of local economy since almost all of peacekeepers are men who are single or unaccompanied by partners or families (Jennings 2014, 314). Besides, peacekeepers hire women for cleaning, laundry, ironing, cooking etc. Peacekeeper’s power, manifested in high income and diplomatic immunity, and weak status of socially marginalised local women both tailor power hierarchy favourable for gender-based violence or exploitation. Local women are also sexually objectified by peacekeepers either in the role of regular sex workers or through involvement in long-term but also transactional relationship based on in-kind payments (e.g. sex in exchange for food). Blue Helmets may be the source of contagious diseases (such as HIV/AIDS) and unwanted pregnancies – phenomenon of so called “peacekeeper babies” (Nordås and Rustad 2013, 512). The unwanted pregnancies can deeply affect relations between local women and their partners and undermine victims’ social status due to shaming (Simić and O’Brien 2014).

Preston and Wong (2004) give another example of how an armed conflict violently reshape life and cause long-standing fear, suffering and anxiety in their analysis of the experience of Ghanaian women trapped in the continuum of

violence through political, economic, and social processes. In addition to drastic impoverishment and patriarchal repression as common denominators of life in the conflict-ridden homeland, women experience subordination and marginalisation when fleeing combat zone. Leaving the extended family makes woman more vulnerable to gender-based violence by either her dissatisfied spouse, exploitative employers, and criminals pursuing profits from sex trafficking. Preston and Wong posit that the female wartime experiences evidence that conflict zones – although seemingly geographically fixed territories clearly delineated towards peace zones – have expansible boundaries, because violent practices are easily stretched far beyond the borders (2004, 167).

For women caught in entanglement of society at war, experience of knowing war brings many disappointments, particularly in those who are to be most trusted in the realm of intimacy. The matrix of military subordination employed on the front steps into home as violent subjugation of women. Idealised gender role of a masculine man as the protector of the nation often turns into a protection racket, where men extract maximum privileges from women based on the mere promise to fight enemies but instead turn them into victims of sexual violence (Sjoberg and Peet 2011). Assaults on women usually increase after the cessation of armed conflict, sometimes to an even higher level than during it, including violence from husbands/partners discharged from the military. Experience of rape in such an intimate social surrounding, which is expected to be the realm of safety, is immensely shameful and painful at the same time and deepens further the subordinate gender status of victimised women. That is reason why the process of documenting and investigating rape cases has inherent negative side-effect of the continuum of violence, as it displays pervasive gender discrimination of victims long after the war is ended (Davies and True 2017). In an attempt to conceive an effective support strategy for war rape victims, Jindy Pettman stresses that, in order to break silence around sexually assaulted women, it is essential to recognise the collective meaning of the rape, which is associated with national, communal, and male dishonour – not necessarily with women's right to physical autonomy (1996, 74). Survival strategy includes denial and silence as the only available ways to avoid social stigma and protect family honour (Jindy Pettman 1996, 75). This means that even various official reports on wartime violence against women, as True warns, present incomplete and unreliable quantitative and qualitative data due to the lack of systematic field research and effective victims protection programmes (2015, 561–562). According to some feminist theorists, silence (and anonymity) can be the only form of agency available to victimised women who intentionally choose to distance themselves from performances of victimhood (Krystalli 2021, 133–134).

Despite various obstructions by global powers and institutional weaknesses, international criminal justice is likely to lead in addressing impunity for crimes related to devastating consequences of contemporary wars on women's rights. The

International Criminal Court can exercise its jurisdiction over individual perpetrators of international crimes and has powers to address the complex needs of witness protection, victims participation in trials, and formulation of reparations. On the organisational level, great improvement has been made by appointing women as prosecutors because of benefits that their gender sensitive deliberation on criminal charges may bring to global gender justice. Women as prosecutors may be of great help in processing criminal cases of sexual violence committed against female soldiers. Criminal investigations and court proceedings in this sort of cases is complex due to dual role of women in armed conflict: they can be combatant and victims of sexual violence at the same time (Grey 2014, 612–614). The International Criminal Court judgement delivered in the *Ntaganda* case in 2019, related to conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2002–2003), recognised for the first time the dual status of female victims (*Ntaganda* case 2019). Girl soldiers were members of armed group Patriotic Force for the Liberation of Congo (FPLC), where convicted Bosco Ntaganda was Deputy Chief of Staff and key operation commander. The International Criminal Court ruled that, under the Rome Statute, rape and sexual slavery of girl soldiers that had been committed by other members of the same armed group constituted war crimes. Unfortunately, Gallagher et al. (2020) show that it has been complicated to establish beyond doubt positive correlation between the presence of women at the ICTY and improved gender justice outcomes.

### **EXPERIENCES OF DOING WAR: MASCULINISATION OF WOMEN**

After having delved into victimhood as one-half of women's experience of warfare, I will employ the concept of a continuum of violence as an optimal analytical tool in examining the intricacies of women's agency in violent wartime actions. There are various ways in which women join and participate in conflicts, either as agents or supporters (Bethke Elshain 2000, 307–312). On the support side, women play the role of a labour reserve ready to replace the male workforce dispatched to the front. Women's work and responsibilities in the rear are doubled. In addition to the household work, they are assigned to provide goods and services to keep the military operations going or to cater shelter and food and/or give information to guerrilla fighters in irregular wars. Yet the division between doing war and supporting war is complicated to preserve as the boundaries of the front and the rear keep fluctuating. Building on Manchanda's thesis (2005) that war and peace are not separate phases but overlapping ones, I will explore whether the usual marginalisation of the female wartime experiences in knowing war, largely through victimisation, replicates itself in women's agency in war.

Women have generally performed on equal footing with men either in the front and in the rear, albeit there have been very few historical cases of massive participation of female soldiers in killing roles (see Goldstein 2004, 59–127). The twenty-first century has seen a shift in the human resources management in the military defying the traditional organisation of one of the most conservative institutions in any society – greater participation of women in military operations. For instance, nearly 283,000 women were deployed in US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan (Kamarck 2016). In the last two decades, NATO and its member countries have included gender component in their military normative and institutional frameworks, on either the national and international level, to implement the UN Security Council’s the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the adoption of a set of ten resolutions, starting with 1325 (DCAF & PfPC 2016; see UN Peacemaker n.d.). The resolutions have been embedded by Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 as the key guideline for routinising gender mainstreaming in NATO’s operational effectiveness, based on the integration of skills and experiences of both male and female personnel, as well as for protecting women and girls during armed conflict (NATO 2009). In an attempt to utilise popular culture in projecting its policy against gender-based sexual violence, NATO hosted UN High Commissioner for Refugees Special Envoy Angelina Jolie at the Headquarters in January 2018 (NATO 2018). Wright and Bergman Rosamond (2021) interpret this a bit surprising action of cultural referencing of one of the most famous film celebrities as a NATO’s cunning plan designed to upgrade its public credibility by exploiting the high visibility of celebrities as security actors. In this way, according to Wright and Bergman Rosamond, Angelina Jolie might glamorise NATO’s global public image in decline by lending to this international organisation a part of “gender legitimacy” based on her professional and public engagements with the issue of wartime sexual violence.

Leave the glitz and glam of the world of celebrities aside and let us now look into how well women are doing in their recently won status in the profession of arms. Neither as glamorous as Angelina Jolie might wish you to believe nor as praised as was Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil (Demi Moore) at the end of the 1997 Ridley Scott’s film *G.I. Jane*. No matter how good their combat performance is, women in the US military are often exposed to an organisational culture based on hegemonic masculinity facing the derogatory binary code “whore/bitch” (King 2016). This binary code not only denies female soldiers equality and professional recognition but mirrors the supremacy of heteronormative optics in treating female colleagues on the ground of their sexuality: in male military jargon, “whores” are sexually available colleagues, while “bitches” are the unapproachable ones (King 2016, 124–125). Few women who have been successfully accepted by male colleagues are categorised as “honorary men”; some even adopt a masculine look (short hair, lack of make-up, non-feminine civilian clothes) to conform to traditional

gender norms. A closer look at the meaning of the status of “honorary man” reveals that it is a social construct that covertly rejects women’s identity as incompatible with the traditional gender role of soldiers. Woman in the military is still perceived as a sort of moral Frankenstein whose violent acts in war are interpreted rather as a biological “defect” of femininity than heroic deeds.

Various measures implemented in Western militaries have not achieved gender neutrality nor they have significantly contributed to alleviating masculine glorification of violence. Yuval-Davis (2004, 173) contends that women are allowed to work in the US military for purely pragmatic reasons motivated by the need to maintain the imperial power around the globe, that is, to overcome chronically low turnout in regular professional conscription, and the inability to replenish general conscription. The recent practice of increased recruitment of women in the military is not a result of the military’s openness to gender-neutral human resource policy but an outcome of the gendered logic of the late capitalism that still treats women as a reserve army of labour. The possibility of greater employment of women stems from decreasing direct participation on the front due to killing from a distance enabled by advanced military technologies (e.g., drones) and from the growing number of jobs of a professional and bureaucratic nature. Yet Yuval-Davis draws attention to the fact that the functional deployment of women in the US military still reflects the traditional gender division of labour in terms of “keeping” female soldiers far away from combat missions as it is still seen as the exclusive male domain, ultimately preventing women from meeting the required eligibility criteria for promotion to higher ranks (2004, 176–181). Ashley Nicolas, a former U.S. Army intelligence officer and veteran of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, denounces a potentially crippling impact of recent changes in the organisational culture of the US Army, in the form of “bigotry of low expectations”, on the individual combat capability (Ashley 2014). She argues that making excuses for female soldiers in achieving professional standards in firing or physical fit – already set by and for male soldiers – lowers the bar for performance and, in the long run, leads to a reduced level of an overall combat capability of troops (Ashley 2014). In disapproval of critiques of the lack of gender neutrality in the military, Resic argues that the process of so-called feminisation of the military, in the long run, may have serious implications for soldiering as the utmost approval of manhood, if women prove that they are able to cope with the mental and physical challenges of combat operations on the equal foot as men (2006, 430). This old, and still ongoing debate on who can do war and soldiering and who cannot has opened important questions about the ontology of warfare in the twenty-first century. Some of them were concisely formulated by Jindy Pettman more than two decades ago, who asked whether the combat is still the ultimate valid test of masculinity that we have to protect in order to conserve the manliness of war, as well as whether men will lose their manhood if women begin participating equally in the combat (1996, 104).

New women's experiences of doing war have come along with evolution of the practice of killing from a distance enabled by drone technology. The new feminine war experience of operating drones has affected the conceptual image of a female soldier who kills in combat by additionally undermining the traditional myth about the emotional incapability of women as natural life-givers to conduct lethal operations. Clark (2022) analysed how the gendering of drone warfare is co-constituted by concepts of motherhood and hysteria, so as to frame the trauma of a female drone operator reflecting the way women's violence is generally constructed as resulting from personal failures and irrational emotionality. Delving into the colleagues' reactions to the emotional state of a pregnant British Reaper operator, Clark's findings show that most male drone operators doubted her operational fitness and capability for teamwork due to various conditions associated with impending motherhood (2022, 83). Women's capability to act as an agent of war is being obviously denied once again under the gendered logic of the continuum of violence based upon naturalistic assumptions about alleged incompatibility between motherhood and doing war.

There are vivid examples of how extreme violence in wartime is not only the cause of women's suffering but can be the consequence of women's agency. The magnitude of the brutality of women's violence that occurred in some recent conflicts left proponents of gender stereotyping puzzled regarding the right answer to the question should we categorise female soldiers who were perpetrators of war crimes as deviants? The case of the systematic abuse of prisoners of war in the Abu Ghraib prison complex in Iraq, revealed by the media in 2004, probably would not have attracted so much public attention – and later become the subject of a feminist academic debate – if female members of the US military were not actively involved in the torture. Photographs of female soldiers humiliating Iraqi prisoners have shaken conventional assumptions about women's moral superiority and inherent inability to inflict pain. The active participation of women in war crimes and violence, particularly in torture, feminist theorists attributed to the patriarchal order reproduced in the US army, which moulded the mindset and actions of women to match expectations based on hegemonic masculinity centred about maintaining a high level of combat readiness (Titunik 2009). If they want to keep their job and get promoted in the military, women come under pressure to imitate masculine patterns of behaviour – even though they are hostile to them because they are opposed to the virtues of femininity. That is why Titunik insists that the case of the systematic abuse of prisoners of war at Abu Ghraib cannot be examined as an example of behaviour based on gender equality, even the perverted one, but, on the contrary, it is another practice of female subordination to the logic of militarised masculinity (2009, 262).

The participation of around 100,000 women in the Rwandan genocide, committed in 1994 against the Tutsi people, has been another major blow to

gendered conventions of the sanctity of motherhood, empathy, and victimhood. The massive and active role of Hutu women in inciting, planning, and organising other perpetrators of violence, and personally in inciting hidden Tutsi members, looting victims' property and, to a lesser extent, rape, torture, and execution are well evidenced (Brown 2014). Brown finds the reasons for such successful masculine militarisation and mobilisation of Hutu women in fear and obedience rooted in patriarchal order, but this time consolidated by effective mass propaganda, which managed to easily destroy women's solidarity by dehumanising Tutsi women as dangerous enemies and traitors working to the detriment of Hutus (2014, 453–457). In her analysis of the civil war in Sierra Leone, Dara Kay Cohen (2013) explains the higher average violence of women in combat by their desire to prove to their fellow male fighters that they are not the “weaker sex” and, in such way, to fight social recognition and affirmation of their social status but under values of traditional patriarchal order. These two cases of women's participation in hostilities and war crimes support the thesis that the masculinisation of women can be interpreted as a sort of gender-based “manoeuvre” of the ruling elites aimed at reproducing the patriarchal order, rather than a step towards the expected greater gender equality.

Understanding of feminine lived experiences of doing war seems to require acknowledgment of the identity of female soldiers as a dual one, which is marked both by the speech and silence. Parashar (2010) argues that, while soldiering is an opportunity for women to have a voice in the public realm, particularly in the postcolonial struggle, it is also another opportunity for men in power to bring back women further into the realm of the private. MacKenzie (2010) explored how women and girls who had volunteered to fight in the war in Sierra Leone, among which over 75 percent were involved in active combat duties, were later excluded from the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process, with their combat role diminished by labels such as “wives”, “camp followers”, or “sex slaves” (MacKenzie 2010, 156, 161–162). Jindy Pettman also points out that the contribution of female fighters is officially erased shortly after the combat ends, as well as their own memories and storytelling of their own wartime experiences (1996, 91–98). In other words, in the gender-based patriarchal order doing war as a genuine women's experience is expected to be only of temporary nature for gender roles can be suspended exclusively during the war, while the return to peacetime implies a quick restoration of the prewar societal order. All things considered, the continuum of violence continues to be a relevant component of women's experience in wartime, even when that experience clearly include female agency, not victimhood.

Another example of visibility of the continuum of violence in women's experiences of doing war comes in the form of either absence of or an inadequate public commemoration of the heroism of fallen female soldiers. Unlike the

practices of honouring the heroism of killed male soldiers, the commemoration of the war contribution of the fallen women combatants signifies a disturbance of the usual gender binary that, on the discursive level, seems to undermine patriarchal order. Millar (2015) examines the ways in which the public duty to commemorate the heroism of soldiers is connected to the possibility of receiving recognition as a worthy life within the existing social imaginary materialised in US popular culture. Millar holds that US female soldiers are imperfectly publicly commemorated and rarely mourned despite the personal articulations of remembrance by their loved ones, because they cannot be specifically categorised within the normative structures of patriarchal order. Such a gender insensitive practice reproduces the continuum of violence in women's experiences of doing war, yet this time after the war and far away from the front, by transforming the disavowal of the need of families of fallen female soldiers to mourn into continued traumatic experience related to the failure of society to honour all soldiers who lost their lives.

## CONCLUSION

It is not novel to stress that a thorough exploration of the twenty-first warfare requires the inclusion of the epistemological perspective of individual experiences, particularly of the female wartime experiences – either of being soldiers or victims. What I have explored in this paper are the complexities of interactions between female agency in war and the victimisation process of women. I have analysed two intertwined planes of female war experiences: the experiences of knowing war and the experiences of doing war. In doing so, I have employed the concept of a continuum of violence because this notion helps in illuminating the connection between deep-rooted social causes of warfare and the society-level phenomena such as: the culture of hegemonic masculinity, the intersections of the public (state, global) and the private/intimate (body, home), and interrelatedness of embodied life practices and abstract/bureaucratic foreign policy projects.

Both planes of the analysis indicate troublesome misrepresentation of female wartime experiences in the official discourse, particularly in the narration and public commemoration of war. Gender stereotyping of lived war experiences led to the lack of or extensive marginalisation of women's role in the war as a highly gendered social practice, both in collective memories and in the mainstream of the discipline of International Relations. While men are celebrated as masculine just warriors, women mirror the image of feminine peacekeepers that ought to be defended as valuable “national asset” as they are social, biological, and cultural reproducers of ethnicity. Devaluation of women as non-combatants – that is, human beings not capable of agency in armed conflicts – is rooted in the strong prejudice shaped by gender hierarchy that downplays women's experiences of war as untrustworthy. If women are not constitutive of war as a part of the reality of international politics,



according to the mainstream IR theories, then female experiences of knowing and doing war are not “eligible” to become a “legitimate” part of empirical reality and, consequently, a part of the realm of foreign policy decision making.

More worrisome is the double victimisation of women in today’s armed conflicts, which is an outcome of a spill over of the continuum of violence on different levels of agency – family, communal, national, and international. If a woman takes the role of a soldier and shows excellence in combat performance, she never obtains professional recognition. On the contrary, a woman soldier is more likely to be sexually objectified by her male colleagues than to be accepted as an honorary man – never as a woman. In the case of committing war crimes by imitating her male co-fighter, the woman eventually becomes labelled as deviant because it is not in the nature of women to kill. When it comes to learning from lived female wartime experience, its validity is once again renounced by the patriarchal order and the state. The fashion in which a victimised woman learns and tells stories about her intimate view of war heavily disturbs a romanticised and sugar-coated image of war in history textbooks. The female optic is perceived as highly subversive because it depicts vividly the traumas of ordinary combatants entangled in senseless violence wandering around through the “fog of war”.

The most blatant example of gender-based denigration of the epistemic and moral validity of women’s wartime experiences I found, unexpectedly, in the words of Yasushi Akashi, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Cambodia in the early 1990s. In response to overwhelming public concerns about the then sexual misconduct by UN peacekeepers, Mr. Akashi tried to downplay the gravity of the allegations with a fairly shocking statement that “Boys will be boys” (Lynch 2005). The described case of Kremlin’s media manipulation of the imagery of a pregnant woman, a beauty blogger from Mariupol who is now suffering double victimisation due to the information war, displays a fresh example of this “never-trust-women” narrative embedded in the gender structure of violent practices.

Despite the representational power of corporate and social media in conveying images of reality to an ever-widening public, wartime experiences of women continue to be blurred and devalued in contrast to the glorification of heroic masculinity. Women’s experiences of war are officially acknowledged only if they fit the patriarchal order and dominant narratives on the state in international relations, not if they challenge gendered discursive practices. The gender stereotyping of women as “natural” non-combatants and homemakers seems to denounce two main ways in which women join and participate in war. The strict division between doing war and supporting war becomes vague as the boundaries of the front and the rear keep fluctuating. We have seen in this analysis that female soldiers may, at the same time, act as agents of violence against the enemy and yet become themselves targets of violent acts perpetrated by their own compatriots. Female soldiers may perform violent acts on the front, as it is in the case of drone

operators, and yet keep taking care of others at home as gentle mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. This may create confusion in designing and conducting research on contemporary armed conflicts, but it also may add valuable insights as necessary steps on the path towards a more holistic understanding of warfare.

## REFERENCES

- Alison, Miranda. 2007. “Wartime sexual violence: Women’s human rights and questions of masculinity”. *Review of International Studies* 33 (1): 75–90. DOI: 10.1017/S0260210507007310
- Aron, Raymond. 2017. *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Asal, Victor and Robert U. Nagel. 2021. “Control over Bodies and Territories: Insurgent Territorial Control and Sexual Violence”. *Security Studies* 30 (1): 136–158. DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2021.1885726
- Ashley, Nicolas. 2014. “Women in military are hurt by the bigotry of low expectations, so help them by holding them to standards of excellence”, *Foreign Policy*, September 4. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/04/women-in-military-are-hurt-by-the-bigotry-of-low-expectations-so-help-them-by-holding-them-to-standards-of-excellence/>.
- Bastick, Megan, Karin Grimm and Rahel Kunz. 2007. *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector*. Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).
- BBC Trending*. 2022. “Marianna Vyshemirsky: ‘My picture was used to spread lies about the war’”, May 16. <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-61412773>
- Bethke Elshain, Jean. 2000. “Women and War”. In: *The Oxford History of Modern War*, edited by Charles Townshend, 303–316. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bousquet, Antoine. 2016. “War”. In: *Concepts in World Politics*, edited by Felix Berenskoetter, 91–106. London: SAGE.
- Brown, Sara E. 2014. “Female Perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16 (3): 448–469. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2013.788806
- Clark, Lindsay S. 2022. “Delivering life, delivering death: Reaper drones, hysteria and maternity”. *Security Dialogue* 53 (1): 75–92. DOI: 10.1177/0967010621997628
- Cockburn, Cynthia. 2010. “Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12 (2): 139–157. DOI: 10.1080/14616741003665169

- Cockburn, Cynthia. 2004. “The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace”. In *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 24–44. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Connell, Robert W. 2020. *Masculinities*. New York and Oxon: Routledge.
- Davies, Sara E. and Jacqui True. 2017. “The politics of counting and reporting conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence: The case of Myanmar”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19 (1): 4–21. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2017.1282321
- [DCAF & PfPC] 2016. *Teaching Gender in the Military: A Handbook*. Geneva: The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and The Partnership for Peace Consortium.
- Dixon, Deborah P., and Sallie A. Marston. 2011. “Introduction: Feminist engagements with geopolitics”. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 18 (4): 445–453. DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2011.583401
- Dodd, James. 2009. *Violence and Phenomenology*. New York and Oxon: Routledge.
- Elman, Colin. 2007. “Realism”. In: *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century: An introduction*, edited by Martin Griffiths, 11–20. New York and Oxon: Routledge.
- Gallagher, Maryann E., Deepa Prakash and Zoe Li. 2020. “Engendering justice: women and the prosecution of sexual violence in international criminal courts”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22 (2): 227–249. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2019.1666025
- Gat, Azar. 2006. *War in human civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldstein, Joshua S. 2004. *War and Gender: How the Gender shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grey, Rosemary. 2014. “Sexual Violence against Child Soldiers”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16 (4): 601–621. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2014.955964
- Heeg Maruska, Jennifer. 2010. “When are states hypermasculine?” In: *Gender and International Security: Feminist perspectives*, edited by Laura Sjoberg, 235–255. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Hyndman, Jennifer. 2004. “Refugee Camps as Conflict Zones: The Politics of Gender”. In: *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 193–212. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Jennings, Kathleen M. 2014. “Service, sex, and security: Gendered peacekeeping economies in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo”. *Security Dialogue* 45 (4): 313–330. DOI:10.1177/0967010614537330

- Jindy Pettman, Jan. 1996. *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, Dominic D.P., and Monica Duffy Toft. 2013–14. “Grounds for War: The Evolution of Territorial Conflict”. *International Security* 38 (3): 7–38. DOI:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00149
- Kamarck, Kristy N. 2016. “Women in Combat: Issues for Congress”. U.S. Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42075.pdf>
- Kay Cohen, Dara. 2013. “Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War”. *World Politics* 65 (3): 383–415.
- King, Anthony. 2016. “The female combat soldier”. *European Journal of International Relations* 22 (1): 122–143. DOI: 10.1177/1354066115581909
- Korać, Srđan T. 2017. “Blue Helmets as Sexual Predators: The Unspoken Security Threat?”. In: *Social and Economic Problems and Challenges in the Contemporary World*, edited by Branislav Đorđević, Taro Tsukimura and Ivona Lađevac, 195–217. Belgrade: Doshisha University and Institute of International Politics and Economics.
- Krause, Ulrike. 2015. “A Continuum of Violence? Linking Sexual and Gender-based Violence during Conflict, Flight, and Encampment”. *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34 (4): 1–19. DOI: 10.1093/rsq/hdv014
- Krystalli, Roxani C. 2021. “Narrating victimhood: dilemmas and (in)dignities”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23 (1): 125–146. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2020.1861961
- Lawrence, Adria and Erica Chenoweth. 2010. “Introduction”. In: *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict*, edited by Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence, 1–19. Cambridge (MA) & London: The MIT Press.
- Lebow, Richard Ned. 2010. *Why nations fight: Past and future motives for war*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lišanin, Mladen. 2017. „Održivost istraživačkog programa realizma u međunarodnim odnosima” [Tenability of the research program of Realism in International Relations]. *Međunarodni problemi* LXIX (2–3): 206–226. DOI: 10.2298/MEDJP1703206L
- Lynch, Colum. 2005. “U.N. Faces More Accusations of Sexual Misconduct”, *The Washington Post*, March 13. [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30286-2005Mar12.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30286-2005Mar12.html)
- Los Angeles Times*. 2005. “Soldier’s Mother Inspires Protests Across U.S.”, August 18. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-aug-18-na-antiwar18-story.html>

- MacKenzie, Megan. 2010. “Securitization and de-securitization: Female soldiers and the reconstruction of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone”. In: *Gender and International Security: Feminist perspectives*, edited by Laura Sjoberg, 151–167. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Manchanda, Rita. 2005. “Women’s Agency in Peace Building: Gender Relations in Post-Conflict Reconstruction”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 40 (44/45): 4737–4745.
- Millar, Katharine M. 2015. “Death does not become her: An examination of the public construction of female American soldiers as liminal figures”. *Review of International Studies* 41 (4): 757–779. DOI:10.1017/S0260210514000424
- Ntaganda case. 2019. *The Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, ICC-01/04-02/06. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/drc/ntaganda>
- NATO. 2009. Bi.SC Directive 40-1, “Integrating UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives in the nato command structure including measures for protection during armed conflict”, September. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2009\\_09/20090924\\_Bi-SC\\_DIRECTIVE\\_40-1.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2009_09/20090924_Bi-SC_DIRECTIVE_40-1.pdf)
- NATO. 2018. “UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits NATO Headquarters”, January 31. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_151259.htm#:~:text=UN%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Refugees,the%20fight%20against%20sexual%20violence%20E2%80%9D](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_151259.htm#:~:text=UN%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Refugees,the%20fight%20against%20sexual%20violence%20E2%80%9D)
- Neufeld, Mark A. 1995. *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Newsweek*. 2022. “Russian Mothers Say Their Sons Sent to Ukraine as ‘Cannon Fodder’”, March 7. <https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-russian-mothers-confront-governor-sons-boys-sent-cannon-fodder-invasion-1685400>
- Nordås, Ragnhild and Siri C.A. Rustad. 2013. “Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers: Understanding Variation”. *International Interactions* 39 (4): 511–534. DOI: 10.1080/03050629.2013.805128
- Nordstrom, Carolyn. 2004. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.
- Pankhurst, Donna. 2010. “Sexual Violence in War”. In: *Gender matters in Global Politics: A feminist introduction to International Relations*, edited by Laura J. Shepherd, 148–160. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Parashar, Swati. 2013. “What wars and ‘war bodies’ know about international relations”. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 (4): 615–630. DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2013.837429

- Parashar, Swati. 2010. "Women, militancy, and security: The South Asian conundrum". In: *Gender and International Security: Feminist perspectives*, edited by Laura Sjoberg, 168–187. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Patočka, Jan. 1996. *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court.
- Preston, Valerie and Madeleine Wong. 2004. "Geographies of Violence: Women and Conflict in Ghana". In: *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 152–169. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Resic, Sanimir. 2006. "From Gilgamesh to Terminator: The Warrior as Masculine Ideal – Historical and Contemporary Perspectives". In: *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Ton Otto, Henrik Thrane and Helle Vandkilde, 423–432. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Simić, Olivera and Melanie O'Brien. 2014. "'Peacekeeper Babies': An Unintended Legacy of United Nations Peace Support Operations". *International Peacekeeping* 21 (3): 345–363. DOI: 10.1080/13533312.2014.938581
- Sjoberg, Laura. 2006. *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Sjoberg, Laura and Jessica Peet. 2011. "A(nother) Dark Side of the Protection Racket". *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13 (2): 163–182. DOI:10.1080/14616742.2011.560751
- Spegele, Roger D. 1996. *Political Realism in International Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sylvester, Christine. 2012. War Experiences/War Practices/War Theory. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40 (3): 483–503. DOI: 10.1177/0305829812442211.
- Thayer, Bradley. 2004. *Darwin and International Relations: On the evolutionary origins of war and ethnic conflict*. Lexington (KY): University Press of Kentucky.
- Titunik, Regina F. 2009. "Are we all torturers now? A reconsideration of women's violence at Abu Ghraib". *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22 (2): 257–275. DOI: 10.1080/09557570902877950
- True, Jacqui. 2015. "Winning the Battle but Losing the War on Violence". *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17 (4): 554–572. DOI:10.1080/14616742.2015.1046269
- Tyner, James and Samuel Henkin. 2015. "Feminist geopolitics, everyday death, and the emotional geographies of Dang Thuy Tram". *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 22 (2): 288–303. DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2013.879109

- UN Peacemaker. n.d. “Security Council Resolution on Women Peace and Security”.  
<https://peacemaker.un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions>
- Vandkilde, Helle. 2006. “Warfare and Gender According to Homer: An Archaeology of an Aristocratic Warrior Culture”. In: *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Ton Otto, Henrik Thrane and Helle Vandkilde, 515–528. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading (MA): Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 2001. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wegner, Nicole. 2021. “Helpful heroes and the political utility of militarized masculinities”. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23 (1): 5–26. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2020.1855079
- Williams, Jill and Massaro, Vanessa. 2013. “Feminist Geopolitics: Unpacking (In)Security, Animating Social Change”. *Geopolitics* 18 (4): 751–758. DOI: 10.1111/gec3.12054
- Wright, Katharine A. M. and Annika Bergman Rosamond. 2021. “NATO’s strategic narratives: Angelina Jolie and the alliance’s celebrity and visual turn”. *Review of International Studies* 47 (4): 443–466. DOI: 10.1017/S0260210521000188
- Yuval-Davis, Nir. 2004. “Gender, the Nationalist Imagination, War, and Peace”. In: *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 170–189. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

## ЗАПЕТАЉАНЕ У „МРЕЖУ” КОНТИНУУМА НАСИЉА: КАКО ЖЕНЕ СТИЧУ ИСКУСТВО О РАТУ?

*Анстракт:* Рад настоји да осветли више питања која су се појавила услед потпуног одсуства или снажне маргинализације женских искустава рата као једне од релевантних тема унутар текуће дебате у научној дисциплини о међународним односима. Анализа у овом раду смештена је у епистемолошки и концептуални оквир феминистичких теорија о међународним односима и студија рода и одвија се посредством идеје о континууму насиља као оптималног концептуалног оруђа за стицање увида у сложеност међудејства активне улоге жена у рату и њихове постојане виктимизације. У средишту анализе налазе се две испреплетене равни женских искустава о рату: искуства спознаје рата и искуства активног учешћа у рату. Аутор закључује да – упркос репрезентационој моћи корпоративних и друштвених медија да пренесу слике стварности све ширем делу јавности – ратна искуства жена настављају да буду замагљена и обезвређена спрам сталне глорификације маскулинистичког идеала јунака. Ратна искуства жена званично стичу признање само уколико се уклапају у патријархални поредак и владајуће наративе о држави у међународним односима, никако ако доводе у питање родно посредоване дискурзивне праксе. Родна стереотипизација жена као „природних” небораца репродукује маргинализацију женских искустава активног учешћа у рату, будући да се жене војници било ућуткују после окончања оружаног сукоба, било етикетирају као девијантне особе.

*Кључне речи:* рат; континуум насиља; женскост; мушкост; политика рода; феминистичке теорије међународних односа.

*Received: 15 May 2022*

*Accepted: 21 June 2022*