RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender and New Wars

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This brief introduction to the special collection outlines the main features of new wars and discusses some of the conceptual thinking around gender in the context of new wars and how it relates to international frameworks, such as UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. It considers in particular different forms of women's participation and constructions of masculinities in new wars. This introduction argues that the binary narrative of gender has been damaging to both women and men and that the focus instead should be on understanding how subordinated populations are made vulnerable to the exercise and abuse of asymmetrical systems of power. To this end further academic research is urged.

Introduction

War is a gendered phenomenon. While there is a significant amount of writing on women and war (Elshtain 1987; Cohn 2013) and on how gender is constructed in traditional warfare (Goldstein 2001; Petö 2017), there is much less dealing directly with the role of gender in new wars.[1] The concept of new wars is an analytical approach which Mary Kaldor developed in 1999 and expanded since to understand present-day conflicts (Kaldor 2012). It refers to the idea that wars can be conceptualised as a social condition peopled by a diffuse and fluid set of actors. These are both protagonists (armed groups, extremists and terrorists, organised criminal gangs) and those seeking to mitigate or stop the violence and provide security (humanitarian aid workers, human rights monitors, international and local non-governmental

organisations, private military contractors, peacekeepers and civilian police) – all operating across state borders, time and space (Kaldor 2012). The violence is both local and transnational and tends to be pursued in the name of identity — ethnic, religious or tribal — rather than for political ideas or geopolitical goals. It is sustained by a predatory political economy (plundering of natural resources, looting, pillage, smuggling of various kinds) and involves atrocities directed at civilian populations as a deliberate tactic for political control, causing terror and mass displacement. However, it is not these characteristics *per se* that differentiate 'new' from 'old' wars, but rather their logic. Some of the characteristics of new wars are, of course, not empirically new but they combine to produce a different logic. We tend to think of old wars as deep-seated political contests between two (or more) organised sides, either states or, in the case of civil war, a state and one or more rebel groups. The logic of new wars is better conceived of as a social condition or mutual enterprise in which the various armed groups have more to gain from

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continuing the violence than from winning or losing (Chinkin and Kaldor 2017: 7). In contrast to old wars, which tend to have high levels of violence as all sides battle to win, the inner logic of new wars is the persistence and spread of violence. They are, accordingly, long lasting (for instance, in 2020 the violence in Syria is in its ninth year while violence in Afghanistan has persisted on and off since 1978). Peace processes based on the idea of compromise between the opposing sides are tortuous and frustrated.

Just as some of the characteristics of new wars were present in old wars, so too were many of the diverse gender constructs. However, there remain many gaps in our understanding of the distinctive ways that gender plays out against the logic of new wars. Their longevity and fragmentation produce multiple and fluid gender constructs, which, in turn, contribute to the continuing persistence and spread of violence.

Although women have been increasingly participating in new wars and have taken up key roles as leaders and commanders, war is still seen as a masculine phenomenon. However, the construction of masculinity in new wars, in contrast to the traditional 'heroic warrior' representation of old wars, is more contradictory and insecure, which may perpetuate extreme forms of gender inequality and/or may offer a possibility for change (Chinkin and Kaldor 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand the constructions of gender within the context of new wars to be able to identify policy options that are likely to contribute to building sustainable peace.

This paper introduces the special collection that came out of an international workshop on Gender and New Wars held at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in March 2017. The aim of the workshop was to explore many unanswered questions in relation to gender in new wars, such as: How are gender roles, identities and structures of power created and perpetuated in new wars, including in terrorist and extremist organisations? How are the notions of masculinity and femininity

created, affirmed, reconfigured or contested in new wars? Why are traits associated with masculinity still more highly valued while those associated with femininity are undervalued? How are gender stereotypes constructed and contested in new wars and what are the consequences for post-conflict peace-building, reconstruction and sustainability? How does the UN Security Council's women, peace and security (WPS) agenda address (or not address) gender concerns of new wars? There were twenty-eight excellent papers from various parts of the world addressing a range of issues in the context of new wars through a gender lens.

The three papers in this special collection[2] address just two of the many dimensions of gender and new wars (see Duriesmith 2018; Applebaum and Mawby 2018; Andrabi 2019). One concerns the many ways in which women participate at different times in the new wars they are embroiled in, and what this might mean for devising alternative strategies for preventing and addressing new wars and securing a sustainable peace. The other aspect is the construction of masculinities and, in particular, how this is affected by the global character of new wars. In this introductory paper, we provide a brief introduction to each of the three papers. In addition, we will shed light on some of the conceptual thinking around gender in the context of new wars and how this could contribute to international frameworks, such as UN Security Council resolutions on WPS.

New Wars and the WPS Agenda

UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution (Res.) 1325 was adopted in 2000 to address the gendered impacts of conflict on women. Res.1325 builds upon important international instruments that have been adopted throughout the twentieth century, such as the resolutions of the International Congress of Women in 1915, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985 and the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action in 1995. However, we are taking Res. 1325 as the starting point for the discourse around WPS because for the first time in the history of the UNSC conflict-related gender-based violence was recognised as a security concern — as a threat to international peace and security. Adoption of the resolution was a major achievement for women's rights activists and organisations from around the world who had been pushing for such an acknowledgment for a long time (see Cockburn 2007; True 2016; and Anderlini 2019 for a detailed historical background of Res. 1325). Nine further resolutions have followed since 1325 that strengthen and flesh out what is now recognised as the WPS agenda (UNSC Res. 1820, 2008; UNSC Res. 1888, 2009; UNSC Res. 1889, 2009; UNSC Res. 1960, 2010; UNSC Res. 2106, 2013; UNSC Res. 2122, 2013; UNSC Res. 2242, 2015; UNSC Res. 2467, 2019; UNSC Res. 2493, 2019).[3] The ten resolutions, taken together, comprise the four pillars of WPS: 1) women's increased participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution; 2) prevention of conflict-affected sexual violence and of conflict; 3) protection against conflict-affected sexual violence; and 4) relief and recovery. WPS recognises the differential impacts of wars on gender and seeks to bring women and their experiences of war into relevant decision and policy making on conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The WPS resolutions do not make explicit how the Security Council perceives conflict but do engage some of the language of new wars (Kaldor 2012). For instance, they tacitly recognise that most contemporary conflicts involve numerous actors in addition to states ('all parties to armed conflict'; 'non-state armed groups') (UNSC Res. 1325, 2000). Concern is expressed at the incidence of brutal attacks on civilian populations and that 'civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements (UNSC Res.

1325, 2000, preamble). The WPS resolutions demand that all parties to conflict cease such violence and 'take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict' (UNSC Res. 1325, 2000). UNSC Res. 2242 (2015) identifies terrorism and violent extremism as further components of contemporary violence and calls for the integration of gender as a cross-cutting issue in activities to combat them. UNSC Res. 2467, adopted in April 2019, recognises the association between trafficking in persons and sexual violence in conflict and terrorism.

The WPS resolutions adopt the language of gender. They *inter alia* call for a 'gender perspective' and 'gender sensitive research'; they refer to 'gender-based violence' and the 'gender dimensions' of peace processes; express the willingness for Security Council missions to take account of 'gender considerations'; support the placement of 'gender advisers' in UN missions and in the offices of special representatives; and urge greater 'gender responsive' peace operations.[4] However, the Council has not defined gender nor added any explanation of these terms. It is important to note that when Res. 1325 was adopted in 2000 gender was (and still remains) a controversial concept within the UN and other international institutions. Only two years earlier, the definition of gender in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as appertaining solely to 'the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society' had been hotly contested (ICC, article 7 (3)). Ten years after Res. 1325, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) explained in a General Recommendation that gender 'refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and society's social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between women and men and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging

women' (CEDAW 2010). The hostility of some UN member states to the concept of gender has not abated and indeed in 2019 the US opposed the use of the word 'gender' in UNSC Res. 2467, seeing it as a cover for liberal promotion of transgender rights (Waterson 2019). In light of this attitude, it is unsurprising that the Security Council has not explained it, referred to 'gender' as relational or adopted the CEDAW definition in its later WPS resolutions. Instead, the Council equates 'gender' with 'women,' who it portrays primarily as victims, needing protection against rape and sexual violence, but also as being important participants in peace processes and operations. It does not, however, explain why women's participation is important, merely stating that this is the case. Men (and boys) have little presence in the WPS resolutions except as the assumed perpetrators of sexual violence and the military protectors of women, although neither of these roles is made explicit. The WPS resolutions make no reference to people who do not conform to the gender binary. Undoubtedly, contemporary conflicts have different impacts on LGBTQI people and some analysis has been developed with respect to the actions of Daesh in Syria and Iraq (Human Rights Council 2018; Davis 2018). The issues and concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) people require much additional research, but this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Women's Participation in New Wars
In considering how differing factors and modes of participation impact constructions of masculinities and femininities, it is important to remember that although similarities are present in different manifestations of new wars, each conflict has its own history, trajectory and outcome. Further, gender and other relations of power are fluid and contingent and will shift throughout the course of any conflict. Perceptions of masculinity and femininity are externally imposed, internally accepted or rejected, and constantly renegotiated. For example, a woman may

voluntarily join fighting forces for all sorts of reasons, including challenging accepted gender roles or acting in conformity with them by following a male lead. She may be content with traditional 'women's tasks' (e.g., preparing meals, cleaning, nursing wounded fighters) or seek leadership and active participation in fighting. Following a ceasefire agreement, a former woman combatant may be simultaneously excluded from disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes because the international entities responsible assume women cannot be fighters (Mackenzie 2012) and from her local community because she is perceived as having deviated from gender norms that prescribe acceptable behaviour for women (KC 2019). Nor can gender be considered in isolation from other intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and disability that construct unequal power relationships and are exacerbated by conflict (Crenshaw 1999). These, too, are largely absent from the Security Council's resolutions.

In contrast to assumptions about gender roles as entrenched in international instruments such as the WPS resolutions, conflict creates a range of lived experiences for women and men. The multiple actors involved in new wars and their long duration provide the setting for different forms of participation that both replicate and reinforce existing gender relations. New wars also allow for new understandings of masculinities and femininities, which are often the outcome of the global/local encounter (Yadav 2016 and forthcoming). Women, like men in different circumstances, voluntarily join armed groups, criminal gangs and jihadist groups and undertake a variety of tasks, including providing care and support, and being spies, informers, messengers, armed fighters and suicide bombers (Matfess 2017). They may be 'handmaidens' willing to carry out the agendas and instructions of others or seek to become leaders and decision makers within armed groups.

Women's participation may also be involuntary: they may be forcibly recruited,

abducted, forced into sexual slavery, raped and tortured, and made to be the bearers of a further generation of fighters (Matfess 2017). For example, the Commission of Inquiry into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law reported that in Daesh-controlled Syria, hundreds of Yazidi women and girls were abducted, sold as 'war booty' in markets, imprisoned in houses and held in sexual slavery (Human Rights Council 2014, para. 53). The line between voluntary and involuntary participation is not always as straightforward as this. The disconnect between the gender stereotypes of wives and mothers as 'good women' and the context of conflict has made it difficult in some circumstances for sexual slavery and forced marriage to be recognised as war crimes or crimes against humanity. For instance, undergoing a form of marriage within an armed group may provide a woman with the only protection against gang rape (Marks 2014).[5] Likewise, a child born of such a relationship may acquire some recognised social and even national identity. The situation of the wives of Daesh fighters illustrates some of the dilemmas of gender relations associated with relationships denoted as marriage. Women and girls, including foreigners who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join Daesh and who married Daesh men, found themselves subjected to strict interpretations of gender roles within an Islamic marriage and society that curtailed their freedom of movement and often involved violence (Ali 2015). As explained by the aforementioned Commission of Inquiry: 'ISIS's rules exacerbate the subordinate role of women in society, reinforcing patriarchal attitudes. Failure to abide by these rules is punishable by lashing' (Human Rights Council 2014, para. 49). The women had not always anticipated this outcome. Following the military defeat of Daesh (and often the death of their husbands), many such women face prosecution in Iraq as jihadi extremists. Others are labelled as terrorists if they seek to return to their home countries. Their choice to live in Daesh territory assumes a level of agency and culpability in the eyes of the Iraqi government that is not disputed by their own governments. This fails, however, to take into account the asserted gender roles within Daesh and the realities the young women faced. The case of Shamima Begum, a British teenager who left her home in London in 2015 to join Daesh in Syria, shows how gender (and other identities such as being a child) are disregarded and vanish when they confront those associated with extremism (Bennhold 2015). In discussions about her status as a British citizen and desire to return to the UK, it was noticeable how rarely her status as a bereaved young woman who had recently given birth was mentioned (Labenski 2019).

Women's participation in various roles in armed conflict, whether voluntary or otherwise, may render them especially vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. This includes women who are involved in activities that are deemed to deviate from socially prescribed gender roles, such as human rights defenders or providers of medical assistance. And, of course, women and girls may be subject to such violence as part of the civilian population regardless of whether they are participating directly in the conflict. Moreover, in the pillar relating to protection, WPS resolutions present women and girls as homogenous and decontextualised victims in need of help and with 'special needs'. This representation is somewhat ameliorated by the pillar on women's participation, but it is striking that this pillar receives less attention than that relating to protection against sexual violence. This has the negative consequence of creating a narrative of women's victimhood and subsequently a collective gender identity ('rape victims') by which survivors are categorised solely by the crime that was committed against them.

In their study on gangs in El Salvador, Applebaum and Mayby (2018) challenge the notion of women as victims and demonstrate the active role that women play in armed gangs. They suggest that the violence associated with armed gangs in El Salvador has many of the characteristics of a new war

and that gender relations are embedded in the very nature of the violence. Most female members have a husband or partner in the gang; their role is primarily to provide care to their families. But they also play active roles as gang members, taking advantage of their perceived non-threatening nature as women and engaging in activities such as smuggling, tricking kidnap victims or providing transportation. Sexual violence is integral to the functioning of the gang. Rape of non-members is used deliberately as a mechanism for political control and female initiation into the gang involves beating or sexual intercourse. The paper concludes that understanding the gendered character of these groups is the pathway to dealing with them. The authors argue that dismantling the "system of control over women's bodies is key to dismantling the structures of gangs."

This need is often recognised by women themselves. As well as being members of armed groups, women are at the forefront of efforts to counter the violence of new wars. For example, women survivors play an active role in demanding justice, in accessing local and international fora to speak out about the crimes committed against them and in refusing to accept the stigmatisation imposed upon them. The documentary film *Calling the Ghosts* (1996) portrays two women in Bosnia and Herzegovina who were detained, raped and tortured in the Omarska camp. They lobbied for international justice and the formation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia with jurisdiction over crimes of sexual violence. More recently, Nadia Murad, an Iraqi Yazidi woman sold into sexual slavery by Daesh, is another example of a woman who has rejected the gender stereotype of feeling shame as a victim of the violence of sexual slavery. Murad has participated in international organisations and spoken out about her experiences to global audiences. She has named them for what they are — crimes of rape, torture and human trafficking — and has turned them into a weapon against her captors for the benefit of other survivors (Murad 2018).

She has been honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, made a UN Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, and a Code of Conduct for investigation of crimes of sexual violence has been named after her (Ahmad 2018). Nevertheless, although these (and many other women and girl survivors) have rejected passivity, silence and externally imposed blame, it must not obscure the reality that countless others may internally accept the gendered construct of stigma and unequal gender relations. They are marginalised or punished by their families and communities for the crimes committed against them.

Other women have become active in combating violent extremism. Mossarat Qadeem, a women's rights activist who runs an NGO in Pakistan called PAIMAN, has shown that how gender is constructed in a conservative society such as Pakistan is relevant both to the radicalisation of women and to how they become involved in actively challenging extremism (Qadeem 2018). She explains that strategies were needed to bring women out of their homes, build their confidence and enable them to become "policy shapers, educators, religious political leaders, community members and activists" (Qadeem 2018). The decision was taken by PAIMAN — a pioneer in preventing violent extremism, in deradicalisation and in advancing women, peace and security — to engage primarily with women as mothers, building on the obligations of motherhood as set out in the Koran to transform their mindset and understand their role in "promoting a culture of tolerance and peace and encouraging resilient communities" (Qadeem 2018). This required the support of male leaders committed to fighting extremism in recognising the new gender roles taken on by these women. Assumptions of traditional gender roles meant that their activities could "fly 'under the radar' of extremist groups".

The paper by Shazana Andrabi (2019), which examines women's experience of new wars in Jammu and Kashmir, shows how women participate as peacemakers within

and beyond their own communities. This is often achieved through what she calls the "enforced empowerment" of conflict brought on by the absence of men and the continuing need for the provision of social services (healthcare, education, food supplies, etc.). Women's traditional caring roles in the private space of the household mutate into societal, public organisation, networking and resistance and make them active agents for change. They also *de facto* undertake 'bottom-up' peacemaking through such activities as negotiation of local ceasefires and passages for humanitarian access, implementation of zones of civility and formation of peace huts and local peace committees. Andrabi provides a powerful example of "enforced empowerment" in the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) — a movement headed by Parveena Ahangar, whose teenage son was picked up by Indian security forces in 1990 and never heard of again. She is known as the "iron lady of Kashmir" (Ahangar 2019).

Constructions of Masculinity in New Wars

The way gender defines and often problematises women's participation in new wars must be considered alongside the different masculinities that also emerge in these contexts. In old wars, men within the military forces of the state were regularly depicted as heroic, courageous and 'just' warriors selflessly protecting their country and 'their' women and children. Gender hierarchy was thus key to nationalist goals and symbolism: put crudely, "the nationalist division of labour was that men were responsible for protecting the motherland and the "women and children" of the nation." (Petö 2017: 5). This purist picture has given way to a more nuanced view of the interaction between military cultures and masculinity that recognises that "men can be seen to encompass a range of possible positions, identities and performances (i.e. marginal or hegemonic)" (Higate and Henry 2004). The armed groups fighting in new wars add further dimensions. There is no simple binary between masculinities in old wars and those in new wars because of the multiple forms that masculinity takes. These new orderings of masculinities need further research and analysis to avoid assumptions based on stereotypes and decontextualisation. In this introductory paper, we outline some of these new forms, which were discussed extensively during the LSE workshop and also emerged from our own research.

Hyper-masculinity

One is hyper-masculinity — a form of masculinity that is constructed on the basis of a reordering of sexual practices, both within the armed groups and through violence against civilians. The extremists' gendered narratives of identity politics, ideology and/or religious fundamentalism, as well as the perpetration of sexual violence and the gendered character of the political economy of 'new wars' combine to provide the basis for this form of masculinity. In itself it constitutes a driver of violence since it has to be continually reproduced. It thereby contributes to the logic of persistence and spread of new wars (Chinkin and Kaldor 2013).

Predator

Other types of masculinity constructed in new wars include the 'predator' and a mutated form of colonial masculinities. Predators are men who take advantage of, or deliberately manipulate, the disruption to social structures and the challenges to gender norms pursuant to conflict, to enter into forced, temporary and/or child marriage. They approach families in flight or in refugee or internally displaced persons camps to urge the sale of female relatives in marriage. They prey upon the vulnerabilities caused by displacement and poverty, or on families' desire to protect their daughters from sexual violence and preserve their virginity and thus the family honour. "Gender inequality comes into play as these concerns rarely apply to boys and young men" (Bailey-King 2018). Human trafficking is another form of predatory behaviour associated with conflict that is also highly gendered (Secretary-General 2018).

Mutated colonial

The 'mutated colonial' is the 'international,' the 'self-termed liberator' or the mandated protector in peace-keeping operations who may have a messianic (racist and imperialist) view of being involved in a 'civilising' mission. He views himself as saving the local population from social chaos and violence and, in particular, instrumentalising women as a justification for post-colonial intervention: "white men saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1993: 93). When peacekeeping forces are drawn from neighbouring global south or other non-white countries, they portray themselves as protectors with an international or regional mandate to defend women from locally generated violence. Protectors can turn into predators, exhibiting a sense of entitlement to women and women's bodies, while remaining convinced of their own moral rightness (Higate and Henry 2004). The inclusion of sexual exploitation and abuse in the WPS resolutions and the call for women to be included in military and civilian peacekeeping operations implies male peacekeepers should be implicated as the perpetrators of such violations. This constructs a further form of femininity — women as symbolic of 'good' peacekeeping, deterring male predation and providing role models to local, less fortunate, women.

Victim

Of course, men are also victims in new wars. Male victims of sexual violence have often been rendered invisible in national and international initiatives because of gendered assumptions, for instance, that only women can be raped, or that men are the protectors, not victims. This view is reinforced by the omission of men as victims of sexual violence from the majority of WPS resolutions. Men and boys who were raped in Syria have said that 'they feel they lost their masculinity and were unable to confide to relatives or friends about what happened to them. Some men become impotent as a result of sexual torture and feel guilty for being unable to conceive. Former young male detainees fear that their fathers will no longer respect them if they find out about the rapes' (Human Rights Council 2018, para. 96). Participants in an investigative documentary on the widespread use of rape again men as a weapon of war and the stigma attached to male rape that was shown on Al Jazeera expressed similar opinions (Al Jazeera 2019).

It has been argued that this blindness to male sexual violence "reinforces masculinist and heteronormative gender ideologies." Male victims may deliberately use words like 'abuse' or 'torture' rather than recount the sexual aspect of the violence they have incurred for fear that admission of sexual violence may compromise their masculinity (Gorris 2015). Male sexual violence disturbs gender relations for its tendency to strip men of their 'masculine' status as soldier, protector, or father, deliberately feminises men, or labels them as homosexuals in the eye of the perpetrator. By 'reducing' men to the subordinate status of women and non-heterosexuals the hegemonic, masculinist and heterosexual society is intentionally perpetuated (Sivakumaran 2007). In similar terms, Élise Féron argues that "silencing male survivors' stories results in the strengthening of patriarchal discourses" and "reinforces the linkages between masculinity, power and invulnerability." This, in turn, further "feminizes conflict-related sexual violence, trauma and vulnerability" (Féron 2018). There is growing policy and academic attention to the situation of men as victims of sexual violence, for instance through mention in UNSC Res. 2106 (2013) and 2467 (2019), the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (Declaration 2013), and support programmes for survivors. Nevertheless, there remains a great deal we do not know about the incidence and consequences of sexual violence in armed conflict against men and boys.

Global/hybrid

Another important aspect of the construction of masculinity in new wars is its global or hybrid character. David Duriesmith

(2018) shows how the encounter between Indonesian Islamists and Arab fighters in Afghanistan created a hybrid new warrior where masculinity was constructed through a transcendental notion of violence. He traces the journey from indolent criminality and lack of wealth and status through a traditional Indonesian Islamic version of manhood to an extremist globalised neo-jihadist construction of masculinity. Applebaum and Mawby (2018) tell the story of how El Salvador's gangs were formed in specific streets in Los Angeles after having been displaced by violence; it is interesting to speculate how this global encounter influenced the behaviour of gang members when they were deported back to El Salvador.

New wars are both the sites of construction of extreme forms of masculinity and, at the same time, the loss of certain forms of masculinity. Something else also happens in new wars. Counter-movements include men as well as women. It is the men in these movements who try to shape a different kind of authoritative but non-violent masculinity that, along with the active role of women, can potentially contribute to social transformation involving more egalitarian and tolerant gender relations. The eruption of violence in new wars is often preceded by peaceful protests; those who take part in those protests — both men and women — often oppose the turn to violence. As violence escalates, they take on the role of civil society, providing humanitarian assistance, collecting and documenting evidence, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, and countering violent gendered extremist politics. It is these groups that offer the greatest potential for unravelling the new war social condition.

Duriesmith highlights that although the WPS resolutions are almost silent about men, implementation of the agenda requires significant shifts in men's attitudes, practices and relationship with masculinity. He points out that WPS Res. 2242 (2015) asserts the importance of men 'engaging' with women in promoting the latter's participation

in prevention and resolution of conflict (Duriesmith 2017) and he discusses how this assumption of some 'good men' (in contrast to 'bad rapist men') has encouraged 'engagement' that seeks to question attitudes and expectations around gender roles and to promote alternative models of positive manhood. Duriesmith concludes that simplistic or tokenistic references to 'engaged' men are not helpful and that more work is needed on understanding men and masculinities, as well as the core goals of feminist objectives and the role men have (or could have) in achieving these goals. A more nuanced conceptualisation of gender in this way would greatly enrich the WPS agenda. While Res. 2242 (2015) was the most recently adopted WPS resolution at the time of Duriesmith's writing, the most recent resolutions (2467 and 2493, both adopted in 2019) fail to either advance the limited concept of engagement by men and boys or make any reference to the positive roles that can be played by men and boys in securing sustainable peace. Nor do they progress thinking on the role of gender in contemporary forms of violence.

Conclusion

The logic of new wars can be understood as a social condition in which various armed groups benefit from sustained violence rather than winning, which contrasts with the deep-seated political contests of old wars. What follows is that new wars must be addressed through tackling their social condition rather than just through top-down peace talks. This necessarily entails the restructuring of gender relations. This is not just about increasing numbers, for instance, the ratio of women to men in peace missions or peace processes. It also entails developing a deeper understanding of the complexity, fluidity, dynamism and multiplicity of gendered roles and how they are reordered in new wars through a complex combination of sectarianism, religious extremism and ideology, and deliberate violence against civilians within the criminalised war economy. The papers in this special

issue about armed groups draw attention to the way in which this reordering has to do with sexual practices and gender hierarchies within the groups. They also show how gender-based and sexual violence play out against existing gender inequalities. Further research is needed, especially on the gendered character of identity narratives as well as the differential impact of the political economy of war on men, women and gender minorities.

This introduction has highlighted the varied ways in which men and women participate in contemporary wars and how this has been associated with different notions of masculinity and femininity. Countering some of the extreme conceptions of 'manhood' associated with violence, as well as the justifications for and the financing of violence, and developing a more egalitarian approach to the asymmetries of power implicit in gender hierarchies could represent an important method of addressing contemporary war. This is why a theory of gender roles in new wars is needed to underpin the WPS agenda.

A better understanding of the active roles played by both women and men in contemporary wars is necessary if their potential for bringing about social change is to be fulfilled. It is thus vital not to embrace the binary narrative that has been damaging to both women and men in past transitions. Instead, the focus must be on understanding and redressing the asymmetrical systems of power that subordinated sections of the population and made them vulnerable to the exercise and abuse of power.

This special issue represents an initial contribution to the process of conceptualising the constitutive role of gender in contemporary conflicts. The aim is to develop this thinking further so as to help provide a conceptual underpinning for the WPS agenda. It is an invitation to further academic investigation in this area.

Notes
[1] See, however, Chinkin and Kaldor (2013).

[2] See https://www.stabilityjournal.org/collections/special/gender-and-new-wars/.

[3] See all WPS resolutions, available at https://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions.

[4] See all WPS resolutions, available at https://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions.

[5] Marks (2014) describes different types of women/wives in Sierra Leone's civil war.

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Competing Interests
The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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