

Introduction to Gender and Conflict

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Key concepts, theoretical lenses, and practical implications

1. Why Gender Matters in Conflict Studies

Aspect	Explanation
Differential Impact	Men, women, and non?binary persons experience violence, displacement, and loss in distinct ways (e.g., sexual violence, forced recruitment, loss of livelihood).
Roles in Conflict	Gender shapes who fights, who negotiates, who rebuilds, and whose voices are heard in peace processes.
Policy Relevance	International law (e.g., UNSCR?1325) and humanitarian standards require gender?responsive approaches to achieve durable peace.
Intersectionality	Gender interacts with age, ethnicity, class, disability, and sexuality, producing layered vulnerabilities and capacities.

2. Core Concepts

Term	Definition	Typical Example
Gender	Socially constructed roles, behaviors, expectations, and power relations attributed to “men” and “women.”	Norms that assign men as combatants and women as caretakers.
Sex	Biological attributes (chromosomes, hormones, anatomy).	Male/female classification at birth.
Gender?Based Violence (GBV)	Violence directed at a person because of gender norms or identities.	Rape used as a weapon of war; “honor” killings.
Sexual Violence in Conflict	Acts of sexual nature used strategically to terrorize, punish, or ethnically cleanse.	Systematic rape camps in the Bosnian war.
Gender?Responsive Programming	Interventions that consider gender differences, aim to reduce inequalities, and empower all genders.	Women’s peacebuilding councils that include men’s participation.

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Term	Definition	Typical Example
Intersectionality	Analytical framework that examines overlapping social identities and related systems of oppression.	A disabled, elderly woman displaced by conflict facing multiple barriers to aid.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

Perspective	Main Idea	Contribution to Conflict Analysis
Feminist Security Studies	Security is gendered; traditional security focuses on state-centred, militarized notions.	Highlights how militarization affects civilians, especially women and children.
Masculinity Studies	Examines how dominant masculinities drive aggression, recruitment, and war-making.	Explains why men may be compelled to join armed groups to fulfill "manhood" ideals.
Human Security	Shifts focus from territorial security to individuals' safety (food, health, personal security).	Integrates gendered threats such as GBV into security agendas.
Peacebuilding and Gender	Sustainable peace requires inclusive participation and gender-sensitive justice mechanisms.	Shows that peace agreements with women's input are 35% more likely to last.
Intersectionality Theory	Considers multiple, overlapping identities in analyzing conflict impacts.	Prevents one-size-fits-all policies; designs aid that reaches marginalized subgroups.

4. Gendered Dynamics in Different Conflict Phases

Phase	Gender-Specific Issues	Typical Interventions
Pre-Conflict / Mobilization	Propaganda reinforces gender stereotypes; recruitment of boys & men; women used as symbols of "nation."	Early warning systems that monitor gendered rhetoric; community dialogues challenging harmful norms.

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Phase	Gender-Specific Issues	Typical Interventions
Escalation / War	Sexual violence, forced marriages, conscription of child soldiers (mostly boys), loss of male labor force, women's increased caregiving burden.	Protection monitoring; safe spaces; gender-sensitive disarmament,