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**UNSCR 1325: IS IT ONLY ABOUT WAR?  
ARMED VIOLENCE IN NON-WAR CONTEXTS**

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## **UNSCR 1325: Is it only about war? Armed violence in non-war contexts<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Instead of focussing on the operational gaps hindering the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), this article argues that gaps are mostly product of the concepts of gender, violence, security that inform the Resolution. Two particular criticisms that have emerged in the analysis of 1325 will be addressed: i) the equation of violence as war, and particularly the equation of war gendered violence as violence suffered by women and girls *only*; and consequently ii) the idea of war and post-war *at the domestic level* as the *main* source of insecurity for women, the international community (of non-warring States) being the main guarantor of peace and security. By emphasising the articulations between war and peace zones both domestically and internationally, this paper will elaborate on one of the facets of violence production and reproduction omitted by the Resolution: armed violence in *non war* zones.

### **Introduction**

Over eight years ago, on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) approved the Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”, taken, at several levels, as a landmark for the advancement of gender equality in the international relations domain.

Once it recognised men’s and women’s differentiated experiences in war and post-war situations and called for greater sensitivity to the specific circumstances faced by women and girls (the main subjects of the document) in all efforts of conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction, the Resolution was welcomed by diverse sectors, ranging from academia, international governmental and non-governmental organisations to grass roots movements. While UNSCR 1325 represents an important breakthrough, opening up possibilities for women to claim taking part in peacemaking and

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<sup>1</sup> The analytical framework and empirical evidence presented in this paper derive from two research projects in which the authors were or have been involved: “Women and girls in contexts of armed violence. The case study of Rio de Janeiro” (2005-2006) and “War strategies against women in non war contexts. The cases of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Medellín (Colombia) and San Salvador (El Salvador)” (2007-2009), both funded by the Ford Foundation, Brazil.

post-conflict settlements, and ensuring that women's rights abuses, namely violence against women, are taken seriously both internationally and nationally, gaps and weaknesses remain.

Instead of focusing on the lack of progress or the number of obstacles blocking the implementation of 1325, this paper will argue that these gaps are mostly product of the concepts of gender, violence and security that inform the Resolution. Specifically, this paper will elaborate on two particular criticisms that have been emerging in the analysis of 1325: the equation of violence as war, and particularly the convergence between war gendered violence and violence suffered by women and girls *only*; and consequently the identification of war and post-war *at the domestic level* as the *main* source of insecurity for women, the international community (of non-warring States) being the main guarantor of peace and security. By emphasising the articulations between war and peace zones domestically and internationally, this paper will elaborate on one of the facets of violence production and reproduction omitted by the Resolution: armed violence in *non war* zones.

By non war zones or formal peace scenarios we mean contexts characterised by growing levels of gun violence perpetrated by civilians and/or state agents at an increasingly micro sphere. These can coexist in a country emerging from war or in settings plagued with significantly high levels of armed violence (organised or not), namely in urban areas. Although they happen at a micro/local sphere, these contexts constitute a global phenomenon, both due to their dissemination as well as due to their dependency and articulation with contexts of peace, war and post-war: drug trade, the illegal and legal trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW), militarization, gender ideologies and social exclusion.

Hitherto, UNSCR 1325 has been commonly interpreted as referring exclusively to war and post-war zones, perceived as the sites of *real* and significant threat to women and girls. Threats and insecurities experienced by women and girls as well as non-mainstream men and other marginalised groups, particularly those resulting from the dissemination and misuse of small arms are, however, common to numerous contexts.

With this mind, the main aim of this paper is to critically examine the scope, foundations and interpretations of Resolution 1325, articulating them with non-war contexts. Firstly, the paper's feminist standpoint on violence, peace and security will be

mapped out. Then, key elements of resolution 1325 will be analysed, particularly the concepts of violence, gender and security that inform it and its main political interpretations. Finally, the issues of armed violence, insecurity and gender identities in non war scenarios will be explored. Particular attention will be drawn to initiatives of regulation of civilian supply and demand in / of small arms, as well as to policies and programmes set up to minimise and prevent armed violence that take into account gender ideologies and which constitute, in our opinion, examples of peace proposals amidst non-war contexts.

### **1. Linkages between gender, violence, peace and security**

Before moving on to the examination of the trajectory, structure and implications of the Resolution, we shall present and discuss this paper's feminist standpoint, questioning the meanings and articulations between gender, violence, peace and security, the four core concepts of UNSCR 1325.

The analysis of the involvement of men and women in armed violence and peace has been long characterised by a biased, universalising and stereotyped approach, focusing on the most visible practices and actors. In fact, both in wartimes and peacetimes, women have been associated to informal peace while men have been associated to violence and formal peacemaking. In light of this, feminist analyses have been focusing on the process of gender roles' assignment, which tends to undervalue women (and non privileged men) and their experiences, seeking to unveil the weight of these constructions in the (re)production of a culture of violence or "war system". According to Reardon, this power structure, which permeates our daily lives by imposing sexually defined roles, hierarchically related, further contributes to the consolidation and naturalisation of power relations valid in both war and peace contexts (Reardon, 1985: 15).

Faced with this masculinisation of war and violence and with this feminisation of peace, and aware of the dangers of a peace research agenda embedded in concepts of violence, peace and security that are also androcentric and perpetuate an order based on gender inequality, some feminist researchers have drawn attention to the analysis of war and armed conflict and its impacts, with the purpose of deconstructing the supposed homogeneity of the 'women' category and its positionality within peace and security discourses and practices. On the same note, some feminists (Enloe, 2000; Stiehm, 2001)

have problematised the traditional association between men and war, highlighting its social constructedness.

Taking cue from the observation that one of the (cultural and structural) sources of violence is the patriarchal system, and taking stock of the concrete analysis of violences experienced by women, some feminists (Moser, 2001; Cockburn, 2001; Moura, 2005; 2007) establish a (geographical, temporal and scale) continuum between the different types of violences and injustices (domestic, armed, social and economic violence, etc.). The traditional concepts of war and peace are thus questioned for being artificial and narrow, and their perversities are revealed: they neglect structural and cultural violences that lie at the root of several large scale violent expressions. This negligence contributes to naturalise micro-level violences, experienced at an interpersonal level (not exclusively by women, but mostly by them) and shared globally, constituting one of the mechanisms of perpetuation of new violence spirals.

Alongside, some feminists have contested the analytical separation established between declared war contexts and other violent practices, such as phenomena of territorial hyper-concentration of armed violence within broader formal peace scenarios, emphasising its constructed and counterproductive character (Pureza and Moura, 2005; Moura, 2005). By drawing attention to the proximity and connections that these expressions of micro-level violence maintain with conventional warzones at the international level, namely in terms of victims and agents of violence, mobilisation factors, violent strategies and sources, the dominant conceptual framework of violence analysis is deconstructed and its inadequacy in terms of formulation of alternatives to violence revealed (Pureza and Moura, 2005: 56-57; Moura, 2005: 89-94).

Consequently, according to this diagnosis of the origin and dissemination of different forms of violence, traditional strategies of violence containment, materialised in the concept of national security, are also questioned. This approach, which analyses war causes and impacts from top-down and associates international security with maximisation of military and economic power, is exposed as masculine and as having a role in the perpetuation of insecurities, particularly in light of their appeal to militarisation (Tickner, 1991: 27-29).

In alternative, a broader concept of security and peace is proposed, one that transcends the statecentric approach and embraces a multidimensional (economic, social, cultural and military) and multi-scale perspective (macro, formal and micro, informal) (Tickner, 2001: 62), proportional to the expansion of the concept of violence. By adopting a bottom-up perspective, analysing war causes and impacts at micro-level, it exposes social hierarchies manifested individually, nationally and internationally. This conceptual and potentially political expansion corresponds to an attempt to disrupt the traditional divide between public and private violence. To refuse the silencing of private expressions of violence contributes decisively to making the existing linkages between these types of violence visible.

In sum, by adopting this feminist approach, we aim to render the mechanisms of violences and insecurities production and their expressions at the macro and micro-social levels (for instance, in the domestic sphere) visible, refusing the formal dichotomy between war and peace (and consequently between violences – expressions, actors and spaces – to take into account and ‘minor’ forms of violence) and exposing the continuities between inter-scale violence sources and practices. We also aim to draw attention to the dangers of the dichotomic approaches which characterise dominant analyses of gun violence in peace scenarios, opposing, on the one hand, gun violence expressions that are object of public security policies and greater attention, and, on the other hand, more micro and less direct violent expressions, which, as a result of being marginalised, perpetuate vicious cycles of gun violence and hinder the discovery of more effective forms of combating and preventing gun violence

## **2. UNSCR 1325: Genealogy, interpretations and implications**

As with other documents, UNSCR 1325 is both “produced by and productive of particular concepts, discourses of gender, violence, peace and security” (Sheperd, 2008a: 14), rooted in different strands of feminism. The examination of these is not only essential to understand 1325’s genealogy, scope and implications, but also to recognise what was left out, what was not taken into consideration and, most importantly, what could have been different.

The unanimous approval of UN Security Resolution 1325 on ‘Women, Peace and Security’ in 2000 signalled a new momentum for women in war and armed conflict in the international agenda. In 2000, a UN General Assembly entitled ‘Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century’ called for the full participation of women at all levels of decision making in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and explicitly addressed the need to increase the protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict (UN General Assembly Resolution S-23/3, 2000). This, combined with the report of the Secretary-General’s Panel on UN Peace Operations (A/55/305, S/2000/809, 2000) led to the development of the Windhoek declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations in June 2000, which in turn preceded the adoption on UNSCR 1325 on 31 October 2000.

1325 also represents an important lobby and advocacy achievement for a network of international organisations at several levels, such as the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (WGWPS). Together with UN agencies such as the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and UNIFEM, it gathered evidence to influence Security Council members on the need and importance of including women in peace processes (Hill *et al.* 2003).

The eighteen paragraphs of the Resolution call for increasing the representation and participation of women in all levels and stages of peace processes; the incorporation of gender perspectives in training in peacekeeping within the UN system; the integration of a gender perspective on all Security Council missions, at all stages of peacebuilding processes, peace accords, on Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) processes, post-war reconstruction, among others; and finally the protection of the rights of women, particularly related to gender-based violence in wartime (United Nations Security Council, 2000).

For several reasons many feminists have lauded UNSCR 1325 as “unique” and a “landmark resolution”. In fact, it not only inaugurated UNSC’s full attention to the issue of women, peace and security, but it also represented the first time that the UNSC officially endorsed the participation of civil society, and particularly women, in formal peace processes and operations (Cohn, 2004). One should note that, as a Security Council

Resolution, 1325 is binding on all UN member states. However, since it lacks an enforcement or accountability mechanism, its strength lies on the realm of standard setting, institutionalisation and norm creation, thus dependent on advocacy uses.

Other aspect praised by many feminists is UNSCR 1325's recognition of women as actors with their own agendas and concerns. Despite 1325's calls for the consolidation of protection mechanisms aimed at women, thus reinforcing the conceptualisation of women as vulnerable, particular emphasis is placed on the recognition of women's agency in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding processes mostly at local level and accordingly on the need to support them. This 'use-value' approach that permeates 1325 and that is based on the construction of women as peace-makers has been criticised, to some extent, as essentialist and counterproductive, having not exactly 'liberated' women as equal participants in policy processes (Cohn, Kinsella, Gibbings, 2004: 137).

Finally, some feminists have welcomed 1325 as a materialisation of a move away from the traditional meanings of security and peace, towards considering security more broadly, thereby paying attention to a more encompassing range of insecurities and insecurity producing mechanisms (Cohn *et al.*, 2004: 138).

The gaps and shortcomings of 1325 are related to its subjects (women), the conceptualisation of its four core concepts (gender, war, peace and security) and its policy prescriptions (increasing women participation and representation at all levels of decision making in conflict resolution, post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding, and gender mainstreaming).

The confluence of women with gender, the permanence of the association "womenandchildren", together with "the perpetual problematisation of women, placing women, their absence or their 'victimhood', at the centre of 'the problem' of women, peace and security fails to notice the problematic role of masculine identities in security discourse and actual wars, or the systematic over-representation of men" (Cohn *et al.*, 2004: 137), hence perpetuating gender bias and further ignoring how gender differences are produced and reproduced.

In this respect, by choosing not to take into account the situations where women are violent against other women or against non-mainstream men as well as other women's (and men's) experiences within other structures of social differentiation, 1325 may also be

considered a reproduction of the dominance of “white, western and heterosexual feminism” (Radcliffe; Westwood, 1993: 5).

In fact, one of the main criticisms regarding 1325’s equation of insecurity and violence as war has been the lack of exploration of cultures of violence, namely other types of violent expressions and structures which give rise to war and can add up to or contribute to the reproduction of gender differences (Sheperd, 2008a: 123). In this regard, 1325’s silences on global, regional and national power structures that range from capitalism, military complexes, to old and new forms of colonialism are illustrative.

In turn, and as a result of the equation of violence as war, peace and security as proposed in 1325 seem to be identified as the counterpoint of armed conflict, ignoring important contributions of feminist thought on how formal peace in itself can support and aggravate power differences (Enloe, 2000).

Finally, 1325 has been criticised for identifying the international community of States as the main responsible agent and role model for peace and security and women’s human rights defense. As a result, the international sphere is perceived as external to the conflict (Sheperd, 2008a: 126), standing in opposition to national spaces, where violence is localised. While camouflaging power relations at play at global and regional levels and their role in violence production (either direct or structural and cultural), this association further perpetuates the international-national divide and hierarchical relation.

In light of these criticisms, of the recognition of 1325 as an international governance tool which has now been mainstreamed into the UN system, as well as of the mandates and functioning of regional organisations (Magallón, 2008: 71), 1325 may be considered as a product of knowledge and policy conservatism, in which gender power hierarchy and neoliberal orthodoxy converge. It reflects western feminism concerns and experiences vis-à-vis violence while marginalising the concerns voiced by proponents of post-colonial feminism (Spelman, 1998; Spivak, 1998; Benhabib, 1999).

Additionally, and in spite of addressing issues of women participation in international institutions and processes (UNSCR 1325, 2000, articles 1, 3 and 4), special emphasis put on the need to support national/local women’s initiatives and specifically on areas traditionally associated to them (UNSCR 1325, 2000, articles 8, 13 and 15), such as

reconciliation and justice, can work to reinforce female association to domestic spaces thereby reinstating the public-private divide.

In addition, 1325 also contributes to deepen the power relation between centre-periphery,

...where ‘zones of conflict’ are assisted by the ‘international community’ to integrate into global mechanisms of production and consumption, thereby securing not only the conflicts in question but also the reproduction of a neoliberal world order” (Sheperd, 2008b: 399).

These biases on women, conflict and the international sphere are perpetuated in the actions and initiatives led by governments and civil society organisations to implement and monitor UNSCR 1325. For example, all eleven countries which have hitherto adopted National Plans of Action, one of the main instruments of 1325 operationalisation, coincide in their sectoral priorities: adopting and promoting a gender perspective on their foreign policies, namely through i) the promotion of gender integration in all stages of peace missions, including post-war rehabilitation and peacebuilding operations; ii) the inclusion of gender and UNSCR 1325 awareness raising in the training of peacekeeping personnel; iii) the promotion of women’s human rights in conflict and post-conflict zones and the support of women’s participation and representation in peace negotiations and implementation of peace agreements; and finally iv) the promotion of gender balance and mainstreaming in both the planning and execution of DDR activities (Sheriff; Barnes, 2008).

### **3. Beyond War: UNSCR 1325 in non-war contexts**

#### **3.1. Armed Violences in Non-War Scenarios: The prevalence of gender ideologies**

As stated before, violent phenomena (whether armed, domestic, sexual, social or economic) in warzones and peacezones are connected. Thus, the violence of war often corresponds to the hyper-concentration of daily violent acts, aimed at specific and vulnerable social groups, usually socially accepted (Schepper-Hughes, 1997). Countries living in formal peace are thus often marked by high levels of daily violence (Bourgois and Hughes, 2004),

sometimes not recognised as such or, when recognised, perceived as less important or exceptional.

Armed violence constitutes an illustrative example of this reality. The ubiquity of small arms and light weapons, facilitated by its portability, affordability and utility, has contributed to blur distinctions between war and peacezones, as well as actors and victims of armed violence.

At the moment, there are around 875 million of small arms world-wide, 75% of which at the hands of civilians (Small Arms Survey, 2007). The civilian population is also the main victim of armed violence: every year, 200 000 and 270 000 people are estimated to loose their lives as victims of firearms in countries living in formal peace – around twice the number of deaths that result from war situations (Small Arms Survey, 2004). These non-war or formal peace scenarios – either countries undergoing prolonged post-war recovery, such as El Salvador, or territories characterised by high levels of gun violence perpetrated by civilians and state agents, such as Brazil, South Africa and the United States, and others, are, however, often underestimated or even neglected in the common analysis of the intersection gender, violences and security.

When analysing armed violence in non-war contexts, it is clear who the main direct victims and agents of armed violence are (Bevan; Florquin, 2006). In urban armed violence scenarios in particular, the face of this violence is not only male, but predominantly young.<sup>2</sup> Yet, it is important to stress that only a small minority of young men becomes involved in armed violence (Jütersonke *et al.*, 2007). In fact, many men and boys have become active in anti-armed violence campaigns, lobbying for sounder international small arms trade regulations and better legislation on firearms ownership and also joining campaigns to stop violence against women. Initiatives like the White Ribbon campaign, initiated by Canadian men with the aim of challenging men's silent complicity with violence against women, are an example of this.

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<sup>2</sup> Among the youth, children are often those who run most of the risks, as shown by Luke Dowdney's two studies about children in the drug trade (Dowdney, 2003 and 2005), which establish a parallel between young men involved in drug trafficking (in Rio de Janeiro and in nine other urban centres in the world) and child soldiers. Despite facing similar and at times greater mortality rates than those at war, failure to analyse violence as a continuum has hindered the visibility and definition of this victims.

Despite the statistical predominance of men as users and victims of (public) gun violence, women are also actors, despite in far lesser numbers, and targets of certain types of armed violence as a result of their gender. Moreover, women endure unique and specific effects of gun violence (direct and indirect) and an understanding of these dynamics is the key to effective intervention.

Where gender-disaggregated studies on firearms-related violence are available, evidence shows that guns play a significant part in the perpetration of violence against women, either in the home or in public spaces nearby (Wintermute *et al.*, 2003; Vetten, 2006; Hemenway *et al.*, 2002; Moura, 2007). Contrary to common sense, such studies demonstrate that firearms are particularly dangerous if they are accessible at home, to someone known to the victim, regardless of who owns the weapon or whether it was acquired as a form of protection. Additionally, even when women are not directly targeted by gun violence, they often bear the brunt of its socioeconomic and emotional impacts, left to pick up the pieces of lives and societies shattered by gun violence (Moura, 2007).

It is then evident that in these violent societies, similarly to warzones, gun use is intertwined with culturally endorsed expressions of masculinity, which associate guns to virility. Two expressions of this are the behaviours of young men and adult males towards guns. Some young men regard guns as a powerful means to obtain status, power and access to goods and women (Barker, 2005). In addition to constructing their identity vis-à-vis other men, young men also form a significant amount of their identities in their intimate relationships, through violence against their female partners. Also in line with this form of violent (and armed) masculinity are the attitudes of some adult males, who often procure guns as a part of their perceived and constructed role as protectors (Kimmel, 2005).

Women and girls also intervene in support of armed and violent masculinity, either by acquiring a gun and/or participating directly in armed conflicts, encouraging men to participate or by subtly endorsing the stereotypes that associate men to violence and protection, namely through the glorification of firearms and the acceptance of women's abuse with guns (Moura, 2007).

The linkages between everyday violence and extremes forms of violence present in war situations derive, to a large extent, from the prevalence of gender ideologies and technologies such as small arms and light weapons, which glorify aggression as an

appropriate expression of power or protection. Gun violence as well as the possession and use of firearms in general are then a result of a sexualised construction of gender, which rests on the exacerbation of hegemonic and militarised masculinity, associated to familiarity and fascination with firearms (Connell, 1985) and the persistence of vulnerable femininities (and masculinities) upon which masculine power can be exercised over.

We have argued that the dominant theoretical frameworks through which we conceptualise violence actually contribute to the inexistence of evidence of that violence, preventing us to recognise its ubiquity and its full scope. In the words of Vanessa Farr (2004: 4),

Framing gun violence as "abnormal" (...) prevents us from seeing that armed conflict is not anomalous but takes place on the extreme end of a continuum of violence. It hides the fact that the abuse of women and other oppressed people in times of peace is only a less intense expression of the full-scale violence that erupts in times of war - which means that war is not so much an aberration as an exaggeration, in organized form, of the violence, often facilitated by prolific guns, that exists even in non-warring societies.

Generally, and as a result of this research bias, both nationally and internationally, State and civil society policies and programmes designed to target armed violence in particular in settings characterised by high levels of urban gun violence have focused mainly on public manifestations of armed violence, of criminal nature. Accordingly, repressive strategies of violence combat have been preferred, ranging from the passage of tougher preventive imprisonment laws, the adoption of stricter policing models, to attempts to diminish the legal penal age (Small Arms Survey, 2007).

Also, and not surprisingly, since men constitute the majority of those who use and are victimised by guns world-wide, prevention policies and programmes in Latin America, Europe and Africa have aimed almost exclusively men and boys, paying scant or no attention at all to the roles and impacts of armed violence on women.

Because women have not been considered the main risk group in armed violence, both research and policy initiatives have therefore been insufficient in terms of charting the complexity of women's engagement in gun violence and of revealing the full breadth of its impact on them. However, the continuums of violence experienced by women and girls in these contexts are a synthesis of the main social ingredients of violence and of its cultural

basis. Thus, alongside sound knowledge on men and boys' involvement in armed violence, a clear understanding of women's and girls' needs, rights and vulnerabilities is essential to reducing gun violence in general.

In the absence of targeted research, investment in addressing the social and economic roots of armed violence and the roles and connections to models of masculinity and femininity, diligence in preventing, investigating and prosecuting violent acts, and attention to violent survivors, repressive measures as well as existing prevention policies are bound to fail and become counterproductive.

### **3.2. UNSCR 1325 and Armed Violence in Non-War Contexts**

As mentioned before, UNSCR 1325's concerns – women's participation, representation, mainstreaming and protection (Sheperd, 2008) – and prescriptions have been generally interpreted as aimed at a certain type of countries: those engaged in declared wars.

According to 1325, these countries are the only places where *real* threats for women exist, thereby sidelining insecurities experienced in countries formally at peace. As such, contexts that cannot adequately be described as either war or peace, such as countries like Brazil, South Africa, El Salvador and others where extremely high levels of gun violence contrast with broader contexts of formal peace, as well as other significantly plagued by gun violence, namely in Western Europe and in the United States are marginalised.

The threats and insecurities experienced by women, in particular those resulting from the dissemination and use of firearms, are common to several scenarios. In fact, both by its global ubiquity as well as its linkages with contexts of peace, war and post-war and in spite of the brief reference in the text of the Resolution to prevention and to the pre-conflict phase, there is no mention of concrete mechanisms to prevent and reduce violence against women and men in these violent peace situations.

Attention to these violent expressions and its global linkages would benefit from a broader interpretation to 1325, encompassing 'peaceful' States as well, particularly those plagued by significant levels of gun violence. In addition to considering 1325 in the foreign policy domain, States would then reflect upon the meaning and translation of 1325 in relation to their domestic contexts, taking into account its violence continuums and violent manifestations. This would not imply military intervention, requiring, in alternative, the

integration of armed violence analysis, prevention and responses in alternative intervention sectors other than the foreign policy field.

The operationalisation of resolution 1325 in the foreign policy realm presupposes multi-level action and articulation between different sectors: security (peacekeeping missions, security system reform), justice (both transitional and post-conflict, as well as regular justice); and development (economic, social and cultural cooperation between countries).

Taking into account (gun and gendered) violence continuums would mean, at the international level, particularly at the bilateral one, that national States could make greater efforts to promote and assist the development of adequate policies, strategies and legislation to prevent armed violence, including domestic armed violence, and protect its victims. Additionally, States could integrate a gender dimension systematically in development programmes and projects as well as train development actors in this field; enforce existing measures in terms of security sector reform and DDR programmes; and reinforce community dynamics of access to justice and the development of proximity security policies. At the multilateral level, States could deepen their commitments towards comprehensive measures of arms controls, namely through the support of an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the UN Programme of Action of the United Nations to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) and its regional conferences/declarations, etc.

Nationally and locally, taking into account gun violence analysis would involve, for example, supporting research and developing local policies and programmes aimed at curbing and preventing armed violence (supply and demand) in articulation to international measures.

As such, support to research centres, think tanks and civil society organisations on the development of specific methodologies on violence analysis and the conduction of research on the private demand of firearms as well as roles and impacts of gun violence on the lives of women, girls, men and boys, would be of utmost importance to the deconstruction of the relationship between masculinity and gun violence, and thus to the development of effective policies, strategies and legislation to prevent armed violence and protect victims.

Another crucial aspect would be the improvement of national legislation on firearms possession and use, namely through the introduction of strict criteria that exclude the granting of license to those with a history of violence in the home or community, and which take into account the declared reasons for requesting a license, the context in which the application is made and the likelihood of misuse. In order to ensure effective programmes of domestic violence combat, harmonisation between gun legislation and domestic violence in particular would be of utmost importance. This should encompass removing gun licenses and preventing their concession to both domestic violence offenders and those under restraining orders, as well as introducing safeguards, such as clauses on spousal consent and approval of gun ownership (Masters, 2007). These measures would be particularly important since countries with harmonised laws, such as Canada and Australia, have registered significant decline in homicide rates, particularly in the segment of women (40% to 57%) (Hung, 2004; Mouzos and Rushforth, 2003).

The broadening of the initiatives programmed to prevent and combat small arms dissemination, traditionally aimed at young males, the support to national disarmament plans targeting civil society and small arms destruction campaigns as well as the improvement of the accountability and training of law enforcers and armed forces constitute other important steps to prevent and curb social violence (Santos *et al.*, 2008).

If 1325 could be interpreted in this light, going beyond the traditional conception of intervention supported by UN member States, we would have an additional and better equipped instrument to strengthen violence prevention in our societies.

## **Conclusion**

Whether in war, post-war or formal peace contexts, the availability and mobility of firearms contribute significantly to greater levels of lethal violence as well as to the dissimulation of the indirect impacts of armed violence. Hitherto, violence aimed at civilian population has not been regarded as a main indicator of insecurity levels. As a consequence, micro and daily violences are often neglected, which further contributes to the perpetuation and accumulation of armed violence spirals at the global level.

By recognising the existence of these contexts, characterised by the ubiquitous presence and use of firearms and the perpetuation of a war system that maintains and

reproduces the exclusion and marginalisation of women, we aimed to reveal the restrictiveness and exclusiveness of traditional definitions of war and peace and emphasise the need to broaden our lenses when analysing violent phenomena and when formulating mechanisms of violence prevention and combat in these settings. If these violences were taken into account, UNSCR 1325 should be broadly interpreted to apply to ‘peaceful’ States as well, particularly those plagued by significant levels of armed violence. In addition to considering 1325 in the foreign policy domain, States would reflect upon the meaning and translation of 1325 in relation to their domestic contexts, taking into account its violence continuums and violent manifestations.

Although it is potentially revolutionary as it could transform ways of understanding how security is conceived, protected and enforced, 1325’s revolutionary capacity has, in our opinion, “recycled rather than re-signified the terms of the debate on women, violence and security” (Cohn *et al.*, 2004: 137). By ignoring these violent expressions and the articulations maintained between warzones and peacezones, preferring some women’s experiences over others as well as silencing men’s and endorsing the authority of sovereign national states as well as confirming the responsibility of the international community in guiding warring countries towards non war (Sheperd, 2008a), UNSCR 1325 remains exclusivist and limited in scope and ambition, perpetuating the same “war system” which it supposedly intends to address and dismantle.

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