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GENDER-JUST PEACE
AND TRANSITIONAL
JUSTICE



**(EN)GENDERING YOUTH FOR GENDER-JUST
PEACE WITH UN SECURITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 2250**

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IN SERIES

1. *Advancing women agency in transitional justice* – Annika Björkdahl & Johanna Mannergren Selimovic
2. *Gender and Culture in Transitional Justice: Rwanda's Gacaca Courts* – Jenny Lorentzen
3. *(En)gendering Youth for Gender-Just Peace with UN Security Council Resolution 2250* - Rahel Weldeab Sebhatu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. METHOD OF ANALYSIS	3
3. GENDERING YOUTH: IS "YOUTH" GENDER-LADEN OR GENDER-NEUTRAL?	6
4. GENDER IN UNSCR 2250	10
5. (EN)GENDERING PEACEBUILDING AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE THROUGH YOUTH AGENCY	13
6. CONCLUSION	17
REFERENCES	19

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Although December 2017 will mark the second anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS), and despite the fact that considerable developments—studies, campaigns and meetings (cf. Youth4Peace, no date)—have taken place since then, it is too early to analyze the resolution in terms of its implementation at local, national, regional, and international levels. It is not, however, too early to analyze and make recommendations in regards to ways this transformative resolution (en)genders youth towards promoting and achieving gender-just peace. The aim of this working paper is to, by means of analyzing youth and gender within UNSCR 2250, explore the opportunities and challenges UNSCR 2250 brings towards ensuring gender-just peace and transitional justice in post-conflict societies. By drawing on lessons and the challenges to gender-just peace and transitional justice that UNSCR 2250 embodies, especially in light of the fact that it was inspired by the UNSCRs related to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), youth agency as presented and acknowledged within UNSCR 2250 will be investigated with the aim of understanding how such agency acknowledgement may contribute to achieving sustainable gender-just peace.

Gender-just peace is not a reconstruction or a return of a pre-war situation—which can often mean a return to patriarchal structures that (re)produce gender discrimination—but should be understood as “a positive peace that provides for social justice and equity” which “contributes to a fundamental shift in the provision of specific rights related to women’s gender roles, a transformation of gender relations in society, and redefinition of gendered hierarchies” (Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, 2014, p. 202). In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which has since been praised as a historic document that “enables the consideration of gender issues during periods of armed conflict as well as in processes of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction” (Shepherd, 2008, p. 383). In an attempt to bring about a more nuanced understanding of the effects of war and conflict on women, and as the beginning of a path towards recognition of women as agential subjects (Shepherd, 2011), subsequent resolutions to UNSCR 1325 were passed, namely UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and

¹ The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

2242 (2015), almost all of which have inspired UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS).

There have been many feminist IR scholars (cf. Åhäll and Shepherd, 2012; Sjöberg and Gentry, 2007; Hutchings, 2007; Alison, 2004) who have written about women's agency in violence in an effort to develop a more complex understanding of gendered agency (Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2015, p. 168), however none of the UNSC resolutions on WPS recognize such agency, but instead continue to echo essentialist logics of gender that suggest women are "metaphor[s] for vulnerable/victim in war" (Charlesworth 2008: 358 as cited in Shepherd, 2011, p. 507). UNSCR 2250 seems to demonstrate a rupture in this pattern, as the resolution clearly acknowledges that youth can be agents of both violence and peacebuilding. But does this mean that UNSCR 2250 recognizes peace and security in gender-neutral terms? The term "youth" does not connote gender difference in the form of the gendered binary woman/man. However, "youth" as a demographic, especially in conflict and post-conflict zones, are highly vulnerable and, accordingly, also gendered. Moreover, dominant discourses on youth and security do place male youth as irrational perpetrators of violence, while representing female youth as passive victims.

This paper first deconstructs how UNSCR 2250 constructs "youth", especially from within the context of the dominant discourse on youth and security. It then goes on to describe how UNSCR 2250 discusses gender, as well as the opportunities and challenges that UNSCR 2250 presents towards ensuring gender-just peace. This working paper presents some recommendations and, in the conclusion, calls for UN bodies, policy makers, activists and youth peacebuilders alike to seriously consider the knowledge and literature on gender-just peace and transitional justice in their overall effort to bring about sustainable peace in our ever-globalizing world.

2. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

This working paper makes use of secondary information in the form of academic articles, campaign documents, and UNSC resolutions. The method of analysis is Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (as presented in Laclau and Mouffe, 2014), which is further elaborated by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). By analyzing and comparing articulations and moments of discourses on youth, peace and security, as well as those (re)produced in UNSCR 2250, this paper

identifies whether or not UNSCR 2250, as a subsequent resolution to UNSCR 1325, acknowledges the need for gender-just peace and transitional justice, as well as the existing challenges UNSCR 2250 has when it come to the struggle for emancipation, an emancipation characterized by gender-just peace, social justice and equity for all genders.

From the onset, it is important to conceptualize what UN Security Council Resolutions are and what they are not, that is to differentiate resolutions from the implementation of resolutions. Both resolutions 1325 and 2250 are historically significant documents, documents that took years of excruciating lobbying and advocacy to see the light of day. The discursive struggle that took place for such resolutions to be adopted at the level of the UN Security Council should not be undermined. However, despite this discursive struggle, to implement such transformative resolutions is a whole different struggle on its own and outside the scope of this paper.

What is important to keep in mind when it comes to reading this paper is that although the power of UNSC resolutions is often equated to the power to implement and localize their impact, there is a significant amount of power demonstrated in the very fact that UNSC resolutions are amended in the first place. Shepherd, in her article on power and authority in the production of UNSCR 1325 on WPS, argues that it is not possible to understand how the resolution was “produced by, and is productive of, particular conceptualizations of gender and security without interrogating the discursive terrain of the institutions in question” (Shepherd, 2008, p. 384). For the case of UNSCR 2250, the institutions involved in its development did not solely consist of UN-based mechanisms, but also (and more importantly) the transnational networks and organizations heavily involved in promoting youth agency in peacebuilding. The discursive terrain or field of discursivity in which one would analyze the production of UNSCR 2250 consists of, on the one hand, the dominant discourse that represents youth as being either victims or perpetrators of conflict and the framework suggested by the “youth bulge” theory (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2014, p. 11) and, on the other hand, the advocacy lead by youth peacebuilders who challenge the dichotomist labeling of youth as either “children” or “adults” (ibid. 9) and victims/perpetrators of violence, while emphasizing youth agency as resources for peace and development (ibid. 11).

Gender-just peace and transitional justice are processes rather than articulations, but to analyze UNSCR 2250 in relation to how gender and youth agency are identified and acknowledged within the resolution—as well as other floating signifiers that exist within the field of discursivity of youth, peace and security (e.g. violent extremism, terrorism, youth unemployment, etc.)—one can foresee whether articulations within the resolutions are conducive towards acknowledging the need to achieve gender-just peace and transitional justice. Moreover, recognizing that no discourse can ever be fully establish [i.e. “it is always in conflict with other discourses that define reality and set other guidelines for social action” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 47)], the drafting and eventual amendment of UNSCR 2250 is treated like a hegemonic intervention of sorts, not because it was amended at the level of the UN Security Council but because its amendment was the outcome of dissolving antagonisms, particularly between the discourse that saw youth as only victims or perpetrators of conflict and that which promotes youth agency and the active participation of youth as peacebuilders.

A brief note on reflexivity: A discourse analyst is either anchored in the exact same discourses they analyze or in some other discursive structure (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 49). I belong in the former when it comes to youth, peace and security. Having been involved in the organization of many conferences on youth and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa, and notably as a member of the International Steering Group for the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders) from 2011 to 2014, I can easily recall the days when we wished we had a resolution on youth, peace and security that paralleled UNSCR 1325. Also, as a woman and feminist, I have always advocated for a gender perspective on the issue of youth, peace and security, including that which promoted gender-sensitive policies and recognized of the active participation of young women peacebuilders. Accordingly, a lot of the reflections that can be found within this working paper are the result of such experience and the fact that I come from one of the most conflict regions of the world, the Horn of Africa.

Having that been said, despite the fact that I was very excited to learn that UNSCR 2250 was amended in December 2015, I am cynical about how such resolutions bring about the positive peace that peace activists fight for. Also, as a discourse analyst, I have come to terms with such cynicism by appreciating how important and powerful the discursive struggle is in itself. The struggle for positive peace continues, and I do believe that there is hope in the future as

long as young peacebuilders continue to redefine the terms of their engagement which is more often than not backed up through working for peace.

3. GENDERING YOUTH: IS “YOUTH” GENDER-LADEN OR GENDER-NEUTRAL?

From the onset, the term “youth” seems to imply age difference rather than gender difference, however it would be a mistake to assume that the label of “youth”, especially within the context of peace and security, is gender-neutral. Although both young women and men make up youth populations, within the context of peace and security there is a dominant discourse that genders perpetrators and victims of conflict, young men making up the former and young women making up the latter.

“Feminist scholars of peacebuilding have highlighted not only that individuals involved in peacebuilding and other forms of peace and security activity are embodied—and gendered—subjects, but also that policies aimed at facilitating peacebuilding rely on concepts, including the concept of ‘peace’ itself, which is inherently gendered. Such scholarship has noted that early engagements with the gendered dynamics of conflict ‘tended to portray a simplistic division of roles: men were the perpetrators...while women were the victims’ of violence.” (Moser & Clark, 2016 as cited by Shepherd, 2016: 123)

Since gender is not solely women (Kronsell 2012 as cited by Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2015, p. 168), and to avoid “los[ing] out on the dynamic relations of power between the identities of men and women that the concept of gender entails”, this paper “employ[s] gender as a concept that more broadly informs an understanding of power, exclusion, and marginalization” (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2015: 168). By employing the concept of gender in these terms, one is able to see why the very concept of “youth” is gendered.

UNSCR 2250 defines youth as persons of the age of 18-29 years old without making any mention of gender. There must have been heavy negotiations or strong advocacy when specifying this age definition since prior to UNSCR 2250 the UN defined youth as being persons between the ages of 15 and 24, especially for statistical reasons (United Nations, 2013). The definition of youth varies at national and international levels; as noted by the UN fact sheet on the definition of youth, the definition “perhaps changes with circumstances,

especially with the ages in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings” (United Nations, 2013: 2). This shift in age number is characteristic of a discursive struggle that sought to re-articulate the floating signifier of “youth” to differentiate it from the “(helpless) child” and the “adult (with full agency and power)”. It should be noted here that the floating signifier of “woman”, especially that of “young woman”, falls under the definition of “children”:

“Groups of youth are already implicitly included in the Security Council resolutions on children and women, as they are young women or still fall under the definition of ‘children’. However, these resolutions do not recognize the specificities of youth and young men above the age of 18. As such they are directly categorized as adults and do not receive any differential protection.” (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2014: 14)

At play here are many discourses that genders women, youth, and children, especially when it comes to conflict and peace. Figures 1, 2 and 3 paint a picture as to how moments [i.e. differential positions articulated within a discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:105 as cited by Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 26)] are closed within an order of discourse that try to fix meaning to the floating signifier of youth, child and woman respectively. These moments, of course, represent youth in conflict areas and post-conflict societies differently to those who live in what Keating refers to as WEIRD countries [i.e. western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic, (Keating 2011 as cited by Pieterse, 2013: 10)].

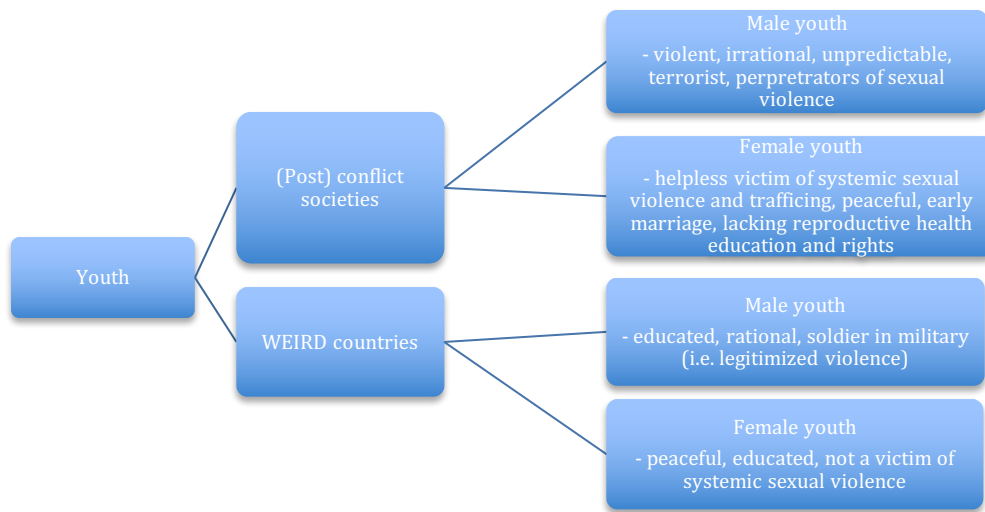


Figure 1 "Youth" moments within mainstream discourse on peace and security

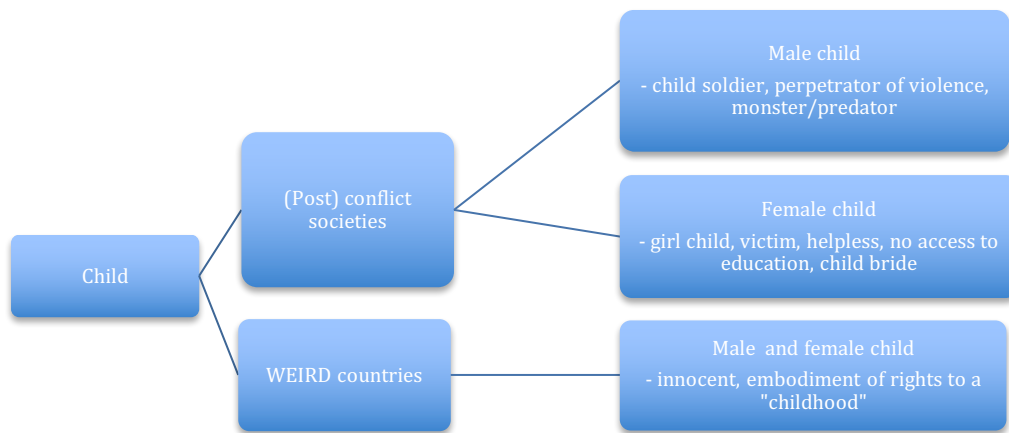


Figure 2 "Child" moments within mainstream discourse on peace and security

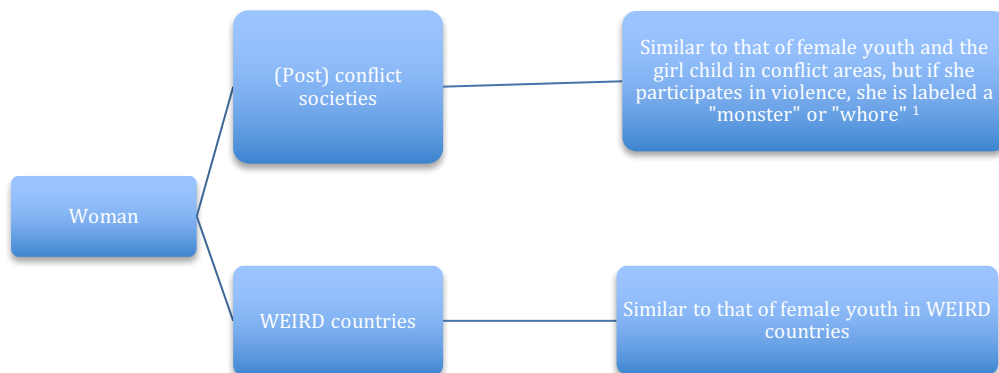


Figure 3 "Woman" moments within mainstream discourse on peace and security²

As demonstrated by the diagrams, when the youth subject is situated in a WEIRD country, mainstream peace and security discourse articulates them as being more peaceful and having more agency; gender difference is also less evident (although still there). However, when it comes to areas of conflict, the articulation of the subject position is highly gendered and the binary of male-violent/ woman-victim becomes more evident.

The articulation of youth as being male-violent/woman-victim is too simplistic and ignores the ontological depth to which young people experience conflict. Although women and girls constitute the majority of victims of gender-based violence, both in times of conflict and peace, men and boys are also victims of gender-based violence especially in times of conflict. This gender-based violence ranges from men and boys being the main target of massacres and genocide (as was the case in both Rwanda and Srebrenica), male-to-male rape, and sexual torture that targets male genitalia (Linos, 2009). In many countries, both young women and young men [and children] are used as soldiers (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2014, p. 11) in state militaries, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations—voluntarily and involuntarily. And, most importantly, many young women and men in conflict and post-conflict countries are working for peace (ibid). Therefore, in order to re-articulate the concept of youth in a way that would emphasize both their vulnerabilities within conflict and their agency as peacebuilders, the discursive struggle that brought about the adoption of UNSCR 2250 had to challenge the dominant discourse on youth and security that dichotomizes youth as either perpetrators of violence or passive victims.

² (cf. Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007)

In 2014, a year before the adoption of UNSCR 2250, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), one of the leading advocates for the resolution, published a document to advocate the language that should be used if and when the resolution would be drafted. This document, titled “Agreed Language on Youth, Peace and Security”, not only makes a strong argument for youth agency in peacebuilding while outlining the particular vulnerabilities young people face in times of conflict, but symbolizes how youth advocates for peace were perfectly aware that their struggle for recognition at the level of the UN Security Council was indeed a discursive struggle. Without strictly defining youth in terms of age, this document outlines the need to challenge mainstream discourse on youth and conflict, especially that which adheres to the youth bulge theory (cf. Kaplan, 1994; Sommers, 2006), and how the dichotomic labeling youth as either “children” or “adults” has resulted in the underrepresentation of youth in conflict resolution, conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2014, p. 9). However, by rearticulating youth as agential subjects, the document does not try to remove youth from women and children but rather seeks to be put on par with them:

“While the interests of both women and children in peace and security have been incorporated in Security Council resolutions, the Council remains to devote a separate resolution to the promotion of youth participation in issues of peace and security. This would put youth on par with children and women and result in tangible outputs that will further youth involvement in issues of peace and security. It is exactly the absence of such a resolution that contributes to the unprecedented underrepresentation of youth.” (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2014, p. 12)

As has been demonstrated, the discursive struggle that took place prior to UNSCR 2250 was one that realized youth are gendered and was also vigilant towards not essentializing male youth as being violent and female youth as being solely victims. Importantly so, the aforementioned advocacy document sought to emphasize the structural problems that make youth vulnerable while at the same time emphasizing how without structural barriers, youth would be better empowered to continue their work in peacebuilding as active agents for positive change. The next section of this paper will look at how gender is articulated within UNSCR 2250.

4. GENDER IN UNSCR 2250

UNSCR 2250 does not make any reference to women or men as two separate genders, but rather connotes youth in what appears to be gender-neutral terms. Paragraph seven of the resolution does make reference to gender-based violence when it calls on all parties to armed conflict to take necessary measures to protect civilians (UN Security Council, 2015: 4), however it does so by saying such protection needs to include those who are youth (rather than just young women). Even though women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, it is true that young men and boys are often the victims of sexual and gender-based violence at times of conflict. To depict such violence in what appears to be a gender-neutral term such as “youth” does indeed provide an alternative connotation to include both women and men who suffer from such violence, while acknowledging the gendered nature of “youth” who are vulnerable to such violence.

Besides mentioning UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions in the first paragraph, UNSCR 2250 makes mention of women only once, and it does so to highlight the importance of engaging with local communities to counter violent extremism by “empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society” (UN Security Council, 2015: 5). This demonstrates that the resolution puts youth within the field of discursivity of local communities who might be excluded from peacebuilding and counterterrorism efforts. Moreover, “localizing” youth among local communities can and should be used when advocating and working for peace, including in future gender-just peace initiatives.

The only other mention of gender in UNSCR 2250 is in regards to employment opportunities, where the resolution calls for gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities (UN Security Council, 2015: 5). Otherwise, UNSCR 2250 comes across as being either gender-neutral or gender blind. Having discussed this issue with a friend of mine who was closely involved in the drafting of UNSCR 2250, I have come to learn that those involved were gender blind rather than actively pursuing a resolution that would appear to be gender-neutral. Nevertheless, the term “youth” instead of “women” and/or “men” implies that UNSCR 2250 avoids the gender binary of “women as victims” and “men as violent perpetrators”.

If it were not for the fact that UNSCR 2250 explicitly mentions, in its opening statement, that it recalls UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions on WPS,

analysts could view the influence of UNSCR 1325 on UNSCR 2250 as being entirely contingent. However, various advocates for UNSCR 2250 have explicitly mentioned the relationship between the two resolutions as being hand-in-hand with each other, both being transformative agendas (Flemming, 2016). This causal relationship has also been expressed prior to the adoption of UNSCR 2250, like for instance in the advocacy document “Agreed Language on Youth, Peace and Security” when it mentions that “the struggle youth face to gain representation parallels the struggle the women’s movement endured prior to the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325” (UNOY Peacebuliders, 2014, p. 12).

There seems to exist a contingent necessity (Sayer, 2000, p. 16) between UNSCR 1325 and 2250, but we cannot attribute UNSCR 1325 as the sole attributor of UNSCR 2250. In recognition of the ontological depth of UNSCR 2250, it is important to consider the various General Assembly resolutions since 1985 that articulated active youth participation in the development of society, as well as in regards to peace and security.

Without mentioning all of the moments and fora that led to the emergence of a recognition of youth agency towards peace, it is sufficient enough to mention what might have been the first time the UN General Assembly recognized youth beyond the binary of “victims and perpetrators”. The General Assembly Resolution on the World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 (WPAY), adopted in 1995, saw a progressive step away from “the dichotomous view of youth as either victims or perpetrators in conflict” (UNOY Peacebuliders, 2014, p. 15), offering a concrete recommendation for governments to empower young people through peace education (cf. UN General Assembly, 1995). On the tenth anniversary of WPAY in 2005, a review was conducted, and that review explicitly acknowledged “youth’s potential to take on meaningful, if not crucial roles in peacebuilding” (UNOY Peacebuliders, 2014, p. 15).

There is one jarring aspect of UNSCR 2250 that simply cannot be ignored, and that is the overwhelming acknowledgement that radicalization and violent extremism is on the rise among young people, and that much of this radicalization is done over the internet. Although young women are known to be radicalized and involved in violent extremism and terrorism, the dominant discourse on terrorism has undoubtedly assigned the gender of “male” to terrorists/terrorism in a way that genders young men from (post)conflict

societies as being hyper-masculine. Linking the radicalization of youth to the internet is problematic, even if many young people are recruited into terrorist organizations through the internet, due to the fact that young people also use the internet to promote positive political and socio-economic change. Suppressive governments are known for convicting young bloggers and online activists calling for democracy, political pluralism and human rights with charges of terrorism (cf. Janbek and Williams, 2014, p. 306). Since the boundary between “terrorist” and “activist” is continuously being blurred with counter-terrorism laws and political rhetoric, one must be vigilant about labelling or framing youth as terrorists and the internet as their main tool to spread radical extremism, not just because it is often powerful adults who are really running the show, but also because on the other side of the discourse, the one of legitimate violence perpetrated by the military, can also be used to symbolize and promote radical nationalism and violent extremism that is often rooted in patriarchy. It is exactly this return to patriarchal nationalism in post-conflict societies (and beyond) that needs to be avoided in order to achieve gender-just peace.

5. (EN)GENDERING PEACEBUILDING AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE THROUGH YOUTH AGENCY

“By engendering [youth] agency and identifying its spatial and temporal dimensions, we can identify which agents, spaces, and processes of agency that may be hidden, ignored, or misrepresented in conventional approaches to transitional justice and peacebuilding” (Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2015, p. 166). As already mentioned in this paper, advocates of UNSCR 2250 repeatedly emphasized that youth agency in peacebuilding was not being fully acknowledged in the absence of a UN Security Council resolution. Therefore, by engendering youth in a peace and security agenda, their agency, at least symbolically, has been identified and acknowledged. Now that the resolution has been adopted, it is up to national and regional government structures, as well as young peacebuilders themselves, to identify which processes of agency are being hidden, ignored, or misrepresented in conventional, liberal peacebuilding processes while they seek to realize gender-just peace and transitional justice.

At first glance, UNSCR 1325 might be denoted as locating peace and justice for women who make up roughly half of the world’s population. Also, and maybe even consequently so, UNSCR 2250 might be denoted as locating peace and justice for youth who, according to the resolution often “form the majority of the population of countries affected by armed conflict” (UN Security Council, 2015, p. 1). However, it can be argued that especially in today’s globalized world, peace and justice benefits all inhabitants of the earth, as well as our physical environment. But as it goes, vulnerable groups do have their particular needs and experiences. These needs often overlap with the needs of other groups and, therefore, the quest for gender-just peace and transitional justice is worthy of consideration for the equitable societies peacebuilding efforts seek to create.

To acknowledge the risk that peacebuilding efforts may result in the re-establishment of gender inequality that existed before and during conflict is not to do so in the absence of empirical evidence. One clear example is that of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). After two decades of peacebuilding and transitional justice processes, the gendered dynamics of these processes are “riven with contradictions and gender inequalities” characteristic of a conservative backlash that sees the agency of women in BiH being “circumscribed, their space to maneuver deflated, and their calls for justice unheard” (Björkdahl and

Mannergren Selimovic, 2014, pp. 201–202). A lack of gender awareness in peace and transitional justice processes creates space for such conservative backlash (Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2015, p. 176), which could also strip youth of their agency and/or silence them as it has for many women.

Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic (2014) map out three types of gendered peacebuilding and transitional justice gaps, namely that of accountability, acknowledgement, and reparation. Starting with the gendered politics of acknowledgement, such acknowledgement is driven by the desire for an inclusive narrative of the past (Björkdahl and Selimovic, 2013, p. 18). A narrative of the past that silences the experiences of women and youth would be one that seeks to reduce and invoke in the abstract their suffering as a symbol of the nation's collective hurt and suffering (ibid: 19). To counter such silencing, the recognition of agency and the provision of space that allows women and youth to voice their experiences is essential.

When comparing UNSCRs 1325 and 2250, it is evident that the latter emphasizes agency to a larger extent. Keeping in mind that UNSCR 2250 is almost two pages longer than UNSCR 1325, mentions of how youth contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as the demand for their inclusivity in peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and in decision-making processes are more noticeable than that of UNSCR 1325. Subsequent resolutions of the WPS agenda do put more emphasis on the role of women in peacebuilding, but the point to make here is that acknowledgement of agency and emphasis on the need for inclusion in the resolutions are vital first steps towards decreasing acknowledgement gaps. However, this acknowledgement means little if actions to implement these resolutions are not taken with the aim of decreasing acknowledgement gaps.

All of the resolutions in the WPS agenda and UNSCR 2250 emphasize the need for accountability; both UNSCR 1325 and 2250 clearly state the need to end impunity and calls for the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Again, such mentions of the need of accountability are important towards decreasing accountability gaps, but are empty rhetoric if not implemented through the establishment of judiciary mechanisms, including war tribunals, to hold perpetrators of war crimes accountable. It is important to note here that the mere establishment of such tribunals is not enough; although over the last decade, there have been a new legal framework that recognizes gender-based

violence and systematic rape as a war crime, “it is clear that gender-based crimes continue to be marginalized and that victims struggle for recognition” (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2014: 205).

Regarding reparations, neither UNSCR 1325 nor 2250 make any explicit mention of it. However, the subsequent resolutions of UNSCR 1325 do, namely resolutions 1888 (2009) on peacekeeping; 2106 (2013) on sexual violence in armed conflict; 2122 (2013) on strengthening women’s role in all stages of conflict prevention, resolution and recovery; and 2242 (2015) to improve the implementation of the WPS agenda. At first glance, it might seem that this is the one lesson that the YPS agenda missed from the WPS agenda. However, a deeper look into what reparations are and should be paints a different picture. The resolutions that do make explicit mention of reparations do so within the frame of seeking justice against perpetrators of sexual violence while also remedying the suffering of victims, which in some ways individualizes those who require and deserve reparations. However, “[r]eparations have of late also received attention as a tool to readjust socioeconomic consequences of war, and, thereby, broaden the scope of transitional justice to also encompass long-term development” (Couillard 2007; Rubio-Marín and de Greiff 2007 as cited by Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2014: 206). UNSCR 2250 makes ample mention of how member states and partners within the UN structures need to create policies in socioeconomic development (including that which increases employment and educational opportunities for youth, as well as opportunities for constructive political engagement), all of which should be viewed as reparations that “hold the promise to transform gender relations in society at large” (Grina 2011 as cited by Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2014: 206). Just like addressing acknowledgement and accountability gaps, reparation gaps can only be challenged through the implementation of UNSCR 2250 from a gender perspective.

There are five pillars that outline the actions that UNSCR 2250 call for, namely Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships, and Disengagement and Reintegration. Some of the action points outlined under these pillars already seek to address the gender-just peace and transitional justice gaps mentioned earlier. However, more can and should be done in order to ensure gender-just peace and transitional justice by paying more attention to the needs of youth while also acknowledging and harnessing the huge potential young people have in building sustainable peace and gender-just societies. Without repeating what

has already been outlined in UNSCR 2250, I make the following recommendations:

Accountability

- States and communities must increase the **participation** of youth of all genders in conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives, including at all levels of decision-making.
- Those who recruit child soldiers and youth for terrorist activities and violent extremism must be held accountable for their actions, actions that should be viewed and recognized as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Such perpetrators of war crimes must be prosecuted in international and/or local/national criminal courts and tribunals.
- All of those who commit war crimes, including that of rape and other forms of sexual violence, should be held accountable for their actions despite the fact that such crimes were committed against female and/or male youth and children, as well as for any other gendered groups of people.
- Mechanisms for the prosecution of war criminals must provide due **protection** for young people who testify against the accused without any negative repercussions, including conservative backlashes from within the society they live in.

Acknowledgement

- The work of young peacebuilders, despite their assigned gender, must be acknowledged. Also, young victims and survivors of conflict must have their grievances acknowledged, especially those who are women, through proper mechanisms including within commemoration practices.
- Domestic violence after conflict must be taken seriously and with the goal of **preventing** a conservative backlash that (re)produces gender discrimination. This can be done through the creation and promotion of gender-sensitive peace education programs and through awareness raising of gender-based violence.
- Governments, peacebuilding initiatives and communities should respond to the needs of youth rather than their potential to be violent, or—in other words—avoid the gendered silencing of young people. This can be done, for example, through initiatives and **partnerships** that foster intergenerational dialogue that aim to create, promote, and maintain gender-just peace and transitional justice.

Reparations

- Opportunities for education and employment (among others) should be provided to young people in post-conflict societies, regardless of their gender, in the form of reparation practices.
- Mechanisms for reparations must be gender-sensitive while also taking into consideration the needs of youth who are also gendered in peace and security discourses.
- Youth involved in or adversely affected by conflict must always be **disengaged** from violence in conflict **and reintegrated** back into civilian life, without delay, through reparation programs that take into consideration their needs as young people.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to shed light on how the discourse on youth and security is highly gendered, not just in the articulation of male youth in conflict areas being violent and women youth in conflict areas being passive victims, but also because of the fact that youth are excluded and marginalized within peacebuilding processes. After explaining the gendering of youth within the dominant discourse of peace and security, it outlines how using the connotation of “youth” verses “young women and men” is gender-blind and yet can still emphasize youth agency as a whole. This might be seen as a push away from the lack of agency often connoted with women, but the discursive struggle for the recognition of youth agency as peacebuilders sought to put youth on par with women and the WPS agenda rather than disassociate youth from them. After outlining the ways gender is incorporated within UNSCR 2250, this paper outlined how (en)gendering peacebuilding and transitional justice through the promotion of youth agency presents both opportunities and challenges for gender-just peace, the main challenge of course being the actual implementation of the resolution.

This paper calls for UN bodies, member states, policy makers, activists and youth peacebuilders alike to take into consideration the knowledge and literature on gender-just peace and transitional justice in their overall effort to bring about sustainable peace. Although UNSCR 2250 does make mention of the need to address acknowledgement, accountability, and reparation gaps, such mentions would be reduced to empty rhetoric if gender-just peace gaps are not actively tackled through the implementation of the resolution. Gender-just peace is a process that is temporally embedded as “backward-looking transitional justice mechanisms seek accountability for past atrocities [while]

forward-looking mechanisms aim to prevent future violence and build new social relations” (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2015: 175):

“A gender-just peace is an aspirational vision associated with the idea of positive peace: a society that resolves the conflicts and contradictions within it in a constructive, just and inclusive fashion and which is thereby rendered resilient and relative[ly] resistant to mass or systematic violence.” (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2013: 29)

Drawing on lessons from the WPS agenda, and now joining the movement of transformative agendas through the adoption of UNSCR 2250, young people have the opportunity to demonstrate the agency that they possess not just in peacebuilding, but also in creating gender-just societies. To conclude, this paper calls for further research on the ways young people demonstrate their agency towards gender-just peace and transitional justice, not just in terms of challenging dominant discourses that essentializes young people as either perpetrators of violence or passive victims, but also in the ways they practice such agency on the ground.

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