

# ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MASCULINITIES, CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING

*Edited by Henri Myrttinen, Chloé Lewis, Heleen Touquet,  
Philipp Schulz, Farooq Yousaf, and Elizabeth Laruni*

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An introduction

*Henri Myrttinen, Chloé Lewis, Heleen Touquet, Philipp Schulz,  
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### An introduction<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Introduction**

*ТЫ ЖЕ МУЖИК. БУДЬ ИМ.*

*“You are a real man. Be one.”*

This is the closing statement of a Russian television advertisement that is part of the 2022 campaign to recruit soldiers for its war of aggression in Ukraine. It shows a security guard, a fitness instructor, and a taxi driver who question the manliness of their jobs and imagine themselves as soldiers (Walker, 2022). At the end of the video, the men appear in military fatigues on a battlefield, looking proud and determined. The ad appeals to an old, familiar, and prominent tale: defining war as a man’s job. As Carol Cohn writes: in the long-told story of war, “it is men who make the decisions to go to war, men who do the planning, men who do the fighting and dying, men who protect their nation and their helpless women and children, and men who negotiate the peace, share the spoils, and share the power when war is over” (Cohn, 2013: 1).

As editors, we recognise this old and familiar story of war. We also challenge it. Situated in and building on the rich, diverse feminist scholarship on conflict and peacebuilding (Enloe, 2004; Ní Aoláin et al., 2011), this handbook seeks to complicate this old and familiar story of war by shining a light on the multitude of men’s individual and collective acts of resistance to violence; of their care and healing; of their survival in the aftermath of violence; of navigating gender role expectations; and of sometimes reasserting patriarchal norms and of sometimes driving gender-transformative and structural change for a more peaceful world. Addressing a persistent gap in scholarship, policy, and practice, this handbook moves the experiences of mostly civilian men into the spotlight, going beyond the preoccupation with violent or violated (military) men that dominates existing research. We do so while recognising that the lines between civilian, military, and militarised masculinities are often blurred in conflict situations and that civilian masculinities are not necessarily non-violent or inherently peaceful (Hamber et al., 2024). Even male peacebuilders, be they external or internal to a context, may hold and seek to assert patriarchal values and norms or further militarisation, whilst peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes often are male dominated, imbued with patriarchal values, and favour men with military backgrounds

and might and/or those with previous, masculine-coded social and political capital (Corredor & Anderson, 2024; Friðriksdóttir, 2018; Johnston, 2023; Kastner & Roy-Trudel, 2019; Krause, 2019; Kunz et al., 2018; McAuliff, 2022).

Feminist scholarship and organising profoundly challenges binary understandings of gender in conflict (Enloe, 2004; Cohn, 2013). This work reshapes our understanding of women's and girls' experiences of and positions in violent conflict, highlighting their agency and multiple roles as survivors, combatants, collaborators, perpetrators, and peacemakers in conflict (Hedström, 2017; Parashar, 2009). Some of this work also foregrounds the relationships between masculinities, militarism, and violence (Cockburn, 2010; Duncanson, 2009). Most of this existing and growing engagement with men and masculinities, however, approaches these questions and intersections in one of two ways, focused on either the violences by men (Hearn, 1998) or against men (Carpenter, 2006; Schulz, 2020). Men's roles in and experiences of conflict and peacebuilding that are not defined by violations per se – including as civilians, non-combatants, protestors, activists, humanitarians, translators, policymakers and -shapers, or as conscientious objectors – are, therefore, often absent from studies of conflict and peacebuilding, though there are notable exceptions (see, for example, Enria, 2016; Hollander, 2014; McMullin et al., 2024). These frequent omissions contribute to essentialising and incomplete understandings of how masculinities navigate and operate in, structure, and are shaped by war and peace(building). To understand these intersections, dynamics, and processes in more complex ways and, ultimately, to be able to account for these experiences, different approaches are needed (see also Asmawati et al., 2024; Duriesmith et al., 2024).

This is precisely what this handbook sets out to do: to provide a more complex and textured view of men's roles in and experiences of conflict across the often blurred lines between civilian, combatant, and military spheres. Through an expansive range of thematic areas across an exceptional array of geographical settings, this collection presents a close, methodical, critical, and care-full engagement with men and masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding. In doing so, this volume reconfigures prevailing assumptions around the relationship between masculinity, violence, and conflict, advancing understandings of gender, war, and peace.

Moving beyond a focus on men's violence and violations in conflict does not mean denying or diminishing their pervasiveness nor the multitude of ways in which men and masculinities continue to be privileged in societies the world over. All of the chapters in this handbook are set, either directly or indirectly, against backdrops of armed conflict and violence or within institutions operating in and shaping the course of armed conflict and peacebuilding. In different ways, they each examine how masculinised violences are conceived, construed, experienced, and contested in conflict, how they subvert and are subverted in conflict, and how they are mobilised and justified and can be contained by structural forces catalysing conflict. Some go beyond analyses of direct, conflict-related violence to examine less visible, often institutionalised, but no less palpable ways of how masculinities operate or are expected to operate to uphold and sustain militarism and militaristic violence in the halls of global and diplomatic power. Bringing together critical feminist, intersectional, decolonial, and queer approaches, the contributions to this collection share a commitment to capturing the complexity of gendered experiences of and gendered power relations in conflict and peacebuilding, including between different men and masculinities.

Overall, the handbook broadens and deepens our collective understanding of the gender dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding, with important analytical, conceptual, and practical implications for research and praxis. Taken individually and collectively, the contributions to this collection chart new pathways for thinking about the roles and experiences of masculinities, opening new areas of inquiry and showcasing the mosaic of masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding.

## **Conceptual reflections: masculinities, conflict, and peacebuilding**

### ***How do we understand masculinities?***

Throughout this handbook, the term ‘masculinities’ has multiple dimensions. In its most simple iteration, we use it as a shorthand for “the various ways of being and becoming a man in a given culture and given temporal space” (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003: 154). Relatedly, the term calls attention to the societal expectations placed upon men and boys to act in ways that are societally constructed and approved of as being ‘masculine.’ While these gendered expressions and expectations are mostly linked to persons assigned male at birth, they can also be embodied and performed by persons of other gender identities (Erdem et al. and Wright, this volume). These ‘ways of being a man’ and the gendered norms around them are multiple, dynamic, and, at times, paradoxical, and are imbued with “idealised beliefs, discourses and ideas about what men should be and are ‘naturally’ are like” (Duriesmith, 2016: 27). As with any other gender identities, masculinities also intersect with other social markers such as age, class, ethno-religious background, sexual orientation, marital status, and so on, creating differences in terms of access to resources, power, and agency as well as different societal expectations (Hamber et al., 2024).

Masculinities – and gender norms, identities, and expressions more broadly – however, also act as structuring logics beyond the individual (Connell, 2005; Prügl et al., 2021), representing both identities and ideologies (Van Hoven et al., 2020). As such, notions of what is ‘appropriately’ masculine inform and shape individual and collective practices as well as societal institutions and their institutional cultures. This occurs, in part, through the symbolic coding of certain dispositions, issues, processes, ways of being and acting, of comporting oneself and performing one’s everyday self as being either ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine.’ The settings considered in this volume – including conflict, war, and other forms of organised violence but also political negotiations, peacebuilding, and humanitarian aid – are typically coded masculine to such a degree that men’s dominance in these spaces is still too often seen as the ‘natural’ way of things.

This taken-for-grantedness obscures a multitude of phenomena, including the gendered, political, and productive work required to uphold the written and unwritten codes that privilege certain men over other men, as well as over women and gender-diverse persons. It conceals decisions, work, and sacrifices undertaken by women that allow men to participate in social and political life, including in armed conflicts. As such, the ways in which gender operates can only be fully understood through a comprehensive and relational lens (e.g. see El-Bushra & Gardner, 2016). Women, men, and gender-diverse persons jointly construct, uphold, and sustain expectations and norms associated with masculinities and femininities in a given society, and these gendered norms are often defined in relation to each other, e.g. ‘feminine’ vs. ‘masculine’ or ‘homosexuality’ vs. ‘heterosexuality.’ Furthermore, masculinities are also defined and, to a degree measured, in relation to each other (Connell, 1998; Gorman-Murray & Hopkins, 2014). Thus, a focus only on ‘men being men’ without examining the relations to persons of other gender identities and to broader patriarchal structures only gives a partial picture.

### ***How do we understand conflict and peace?***

In this handbook, we purposely take a broad understanding of ‘conflict’ that goes beyond what is conventionally thought of as war to also include, for example, situations of chronic criminal armed violence (chapters by Baird and Kelly, this volume) and occupation (Campbell and Ní Aoláin, this volume). We also conceive of peacebuilding in a comprehensive way, including, for example, humanitarian assistance (Read, this volume), transitional justice (Ortiz and Otálora-Gallego, this

volume), post-conflict trauma work (Riley and Vale, and Slegh et al., this volume), or preventing domestic violence in conflict-affected societies (Lewis et al. and Masta and Garasu, this volume).

A number of the contributions also destabilise the notion of armed conflict being bounded by time and space, highlighting how physical and mental trauma and/or displacement continue to shape lives after the end of a conflict or after escaping a war zone (in this volume: de Jong and Shajjan, Erdem et al., Linthout, Mosqueira, Paul, Sünbuloğlu, Touquet, and Schulz). These contributions thus question the utility of the notion of ‘post-conflict’ that can convey an illusory temporal dichotomy, obscuring the reality that “a great many people find themselves caught in a prolonged crisis rather than merely passing through it” (Vigh, 2008: 8). As with any social phenomenon, the impacts and social dynamics of these crises are gendered, and throughout the volume, the authors underscore the multiplicity, fluidity, but also continuities of masculinities and of men’s experiences of armed violence, displacement, and their aftermath.

### **Positioning the book**

To date, evolving research and policy on men and masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding often pay scant attention to non-elite, civilian, and non-combatant men and masculinities. We deliberately focus here on these ‘forgotten’ civilian men and masculinities and the very real deprivations, struggles, and suffering they face (Moran, 2010: 268). That said, men – especially cis-gender and heterosexual men and those who can ‘pass’ as such – maintain patriarchal privileges, elevated positions, as well as a sense of entitlement to these. Echoing Henry (2017) and Myrntinen and Schulz (2023), examining the impacts of armed conflict on men and boys, cannot come at the expense of women, girls, and gender-diverse persons. Also, adult men – civilian or military – are often regarded as the ungendered norm, the ones who are targeted by policies and programmes when the focus is not explicitly on women, children, or, in rare cases, gender-diverse persons. By placing a spotlight on masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding, the handbook reveals the ways (civilian) men uphold, interact with, are impacted by, resist, and are complicit in sustaining militarisation and gendered violence in such settings. Such an understanding is fundamental to securing gender-justice peace.

In this spirit, the handbook is led by feminist, relational, intersectional, and decolonial ethics. By intersectionality, we refer to analytical approaches inspired by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and others, which seek to examine how race, class, sexual orientation, and other factors intersect with gender to create power differentials. When drawing on intersectionality in the context of masculinities, it is worth keeping in mind the origin of the term as a critique of racialised patriarchy, which places certain men in positions of power over women and other men, and those with other gender identities. Thus, even when examining men’s vulnerabilities and intersecting modes of repression, we need to acknowledge that all men still enjoy patriarchal privileges vis-à-vis others (Henry, 2017).

In line with feminist ideals of reflexivity in knowledge production (see Giri, this volume), it is important that we also situate our own positionalities, curiosities, and ambitions in taking on this task. Individually and collectively, the editors and contributors have all worked on different dimensions of masculinities, conflict, and peace over the past decades. As an editorial team, we bring with us a wide range of experiences of working on gender, peacebuilding, and conflict from academic research as well as civil society work, activism, policy engagement with a range of national and supranational stakeholders, media, and social work with marginalised communities. As an editorial team, we also embody a range of gender, sexual, and racial identities, represent and are located in different political and physical geographies, and are united by a shared commitment

to promoting and upholding queer-feminist, intersectional, anti-racist, pacifist, and decolonial ideals in our research and praxis in the field of gender, peace, and security (and beyond). To this end, we take seriously calls for decoloniality in masculinity studies (Ratele, 2021) and in gender and peacebuilding research and practice more broadly (Dery et al., 2022; Hudson, 2009). We acknowledge that most analytical tools applied in this field are heavily geared towards and shaped by Global North epistemologies and ontologies, and much more work remains to be done to undo this. Colonial legacies are present in various forms in the settings explored in this collection, some more visible than others. These include the use of draconian colonial-era laws to quash democratic protests (Gaborit and Russell, this volume), the continuing impacts of colonial-era borders and legal frameworks (Yousaf and Shah, this volume), the lingering after-effects of colonial-era patriarchal norms, structural violence, and societal inequalities (Baird; Erdem et al.; Maia et al., this volume), inherent Euro-centrism in the framing of gender-responsive peacebuilding (Hooser, this volume), or the neo-colonial ‘white saviour’ tropes present in the humanitarian imaginary (Read, this volume). We also question the assumed cis-gender and heterosexual nature of men and masculinities by also including research on persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in conflict-affected situations (Erdem et al., Ortiz and Otálora-Gallego, this volume). However, the chapters by Linthout et al. and Paul (this volume) also challenge us to think about latent heteronormative assumptions in research and policy responses to conflict and displacement beyond SOGIESC, for example with respect to refugee men’s care work, which is often overlooked in gendered representations.

Centring these ethics was central to our editorial process. Bringing together authors from a wide variety of backgrounds and geographical regions, the handbook prioritises contributions from Global South and early-career authors, both from within and outside of academia. We nevertheless acknowledge that our respective positionalities and existing networks, as well as the power structures within academia and beyond, can, at times, also limit our ability to truly reflect and represent the full range of perspectives in the way we initially hoped. Despite this, the collection nonetheless unquestionably offers an unparalleled set of voices, each engaging in care-full, critical, and nuanced ways with masculinities.

As rich, diverse, and encompassing as the contributions included in this volume are, we do not see this project as an end in itself but rather as a joint effort of thinking, questioning, theorising, and analysing that intends to chart ways forward. Specifically, we wish for this project to spur a collective re-imagining of the field of gender, conflict, and peace by centring a diversity and plurality of perspectives and understandings and by facilitating dialogue and discussion between different lenses and approaches, including, in particular, aspects that thus far remain absent and forgotten across intersecting debates.

### **Overview of the book**

The handbook is structured around six separate yet intertwined sections – an introductory, framing section and five thematic clusters. After the initial chapters, which outline the key terms, theoretical approaches, and ethical concerns underpinning this handbook, the following five thematic sections of the handbook follow a rough narrative arc. This begins with an examination in section 2 of how different types of violent conflict and repression impact on civilian men and masculinities, including outright war, contexts of pervasive armed urban violence, occupation, insurgent rule, and protracted low-level conflicts that periodically escalate. By covering a range of violent contexts and very different men affected by them, we seek to broaden conceptualisations of violent conflict in literature and practice. The third broader thematic section examines masculinities from an angle of vulnerability,

agency, and care. The chapters include examining how masculinities impact and are impacted by but also shape men's experiences of conflict-related sexual violence, trauma, conflict-related disability, but also of mutual care and fatherhood in displacement. The section thus seeks to broaden our view of men in conflict, which often has tended to focus on men's violences and less on how men experience and seek to cope with the aftermaths of that violence. The fourth section zooms out a bit from the often visceral and granular contributions of the previous two sections to examine how peacebuilding and humanitarian policy and practice conceive of and imagine masculinities – and how this is reflected 'on the ground,' as it were. The chapters grant us very different yet complementary perspectives, examining the conceptual framings of masculinities – and lack thereof – the ways in which masculinities do work in the processes of policy formulation, and how these are reflected upon by implementers of these policies and their intended beneficiaries. The fifth section examines what opportunities are opened and which are foreclosed in terms of changing masculine gender norms and performances during and in the aftermath of violence. The chapters again cover a range of different kinds of violent contexts and showcase possibilities for individual and broader societal levels of changing masculinities, as well as patriarchal backlash against increased gender equality. The chapters of the sixth and final section examine programmes to transform masculinities in conflict-affected settings. While some of these are implemented by international and local actors together, others are purely local initiatives and seek to reduce men's violent behaviour while also attending to the after-effects of trauma and violence inflicted upon or by them.

### ***Part 1: Theoretical framings***

The theoretical framing section provides an overview of the key concepts from masculinities theories applied by contributors across the volume, a summary of the current state of the literature, as well as a reminder about the need for feminist accountability. In her chapter, Amy Dwyer-Neigenfind examines some of the most salient approaches used in critical studies of men and masculinities, in particular the concepts of hegemonic and military/militarised masculinities, but also inclusive, and caring masculinities. Dwyer-Neigenfind maps these conceptual tools onto the on-the-ground experiences of gendered peacebuilding work, highlighting both how these tools expand our understandings of conflict-affected masculinities but also what gaps exist in conceptualisations of enlisting men and masculinities in peacebuilding. In the next chapter, the handbook editors together with Anisa Abeytia, Esther Brito, John Sunday, and Obasesam Okoi give an overview of the current state of the literature, and highlight key gaps pertaining to civilian men and masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding – situating the overall volume within existing scholarship. The chapter has a deliberately strong focus on what a decolonial approach to this field could mean as well as on the (paradoxical) invisibilisation of men, masculinities, and patriarchy in peacebuilding. In the final chapter of this section, Keshab Giri reflects on the dilemmas and discomforts of doing feminist research on men and masculinities as a man. The chapter is an important ethical anchor for this volume, in which all of our authors, to some degree, draw on feminist-inspired framings, all seek to take men's experiences and challenges seriously, but also are cautious to not lose sight of men's patriarchal and heteronormative entitlement vis-à-vis women and gender-diverse persons.

### ***Part 2: Civilian masculinities and the spectrum of violent contexts***

Sara de Jong and Sayed Jalal Shajjan open the second part of the handbook, which focuses on civilian masculinities in different contexts of violence, with a chapter on men who find themselves,



in many ways, in a state of limbo: Afghan interpreters who worked for Western militaries in the country. While considered civilians, they were fully embedded into the routines of military life; while often motivated to work for a better future for their country, they were and are seen as traitors by others; and their erstwhile employers have often left them in a precarious legal grey zone after the withdrawal of forces. The following chapter takes the reader to a very different context of protracted violence, namely the gangs of Belize City. Adam Baird traces the histories of chronic vulnerability in the Southside, dating back to the slave barracks of the British colonial era and how the gendered dynamics of gang violence not only lead to violence against women and girls but, importantly, create masculine vulnerabilities. Next, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Seamus Campbell examine the multi-dimensional gendered effects of the Israeli occupation of Palestine on civilian women and men, girls and boys. In their analysis, they specifically highlight how “masculinities enable, sustain, function and are shaped by the practices of occupation and in turn play a central role in the construction of that practice.” Jennefer Lyn L. Bagaporo’s chapter on ‘doing’ *padre de pamilya* focuses on how men in Mindanao in the Southern Philippines seek to navigate dominant expectations of what it means to be a man in the context of a protracted conflict, which then escalated into a siege. While some of the men adjust some of the masculine-coded expectations they place on other men and on themselves, in many ways, the dominant expectations remain in place, and men seek alternate ways of achieving them.

Zeynep Pınar Erdem, Henri Myrntinen and Charbel Maydaa next look at a very different way of navigating expectations of being ‘a real man.’ Drawing on research conducted in Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, the authors examine how men of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) have to calibrate their performances of masculinity as a survival tactic in areas controlled by Islamist insurgents, homo- and transphobic state security forces, but also violently heteronormative societal and family settings. In the final chapter of this section, Farooq Yousaf and Syed Shah examine how protracted conflict and militarisation intersect with prior cultural norms and precepts in Pashtun society in Pakistan. These dynamics have led to an entrenching of militarised masculinities and a narrowly patriarchal reading of accepted gender norms.

### ***Part 3: Masculinities, agency, vulnerability and care***

The next thematic section on masculinities, agency, vulnerability, and care opens with a chapter by Jessica Auchter, who draws on her work on conflict-related sexual violence to examine gendered binaries of agency and victimhood. In her chapter, Auchter calls into question and complicates prevalent tropes and gendered codings of the agency/victim binary, highlighting instead its contingent nature and how people often transcend these categories. Heidi Riley and Gina Vale next take a multi-country approach to examine how men in Iraq, Nepal, and Syria are affected by and deal with conflict-related trauma. They highlight how “mental health issues intersect with gendered stigmas and masculine expectations,” what this means for the men, and chart ways forward for future research and policy responses. Drawing in part on their own research in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Uganda, but also a thorough review of the growing literature on the issue, Heleen Touquet and Philipp Schulz next examine conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys, its gendered impacts, and the gaps which they identify vis-à-vis how peacebuilding policy and practice has – and has not – engaged with this issue. In the following chapter, Nurseli Yeşim Sünbuloğlu recounts the experiences of war-disabled Turkish veterans of the war in Kurdistan. The chapter examines the interplay of disabilities and masculinities but also the long-term psychological and societal impacts of counter-insurgency.



The following two chapters look at masculinities in the context of conflict-related displacement to Europe, highlighting the stark contrasts between men's lived realities and the dominant public and media perceptions of refugee men on the continent. First, Oska Paul contemplates the politics of care and how these link to masculinities amongst refugee men in Greece. Paul draws the reader's attention especially to caring practices amongst young, single men from Muslim-majority countries, who are often portrayed as a danger in public discourse but whose needs and vulnerabilities often are overlooked in the humanitarian system. On a similar note, but with a focus on fatherhood, Leni Linthout, Ines Keygnaert, and Ilse Derluyn explore caring practices of asylum-seeking fathers in Belgium. Drawing on Linthout's ethnographic fieldwork, the chapter examines how both fatherhood and displacement transform the men's gendered selves but also their relationships with their families.

#### ***Part 4: Masculinities in Peacebuilding***

The next part of the handbook examines how men and masculinities are conceived of both in design and implementation of peacebuilding and humanitarian policy. It starts with a critical examination of the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda by Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown. The WPS agenda has been a key policy framework through which gender perspectives have been brought into policies on prevention and resolving violent conflict and addressing its aftermath, but as de Jonge Oudraat and Brown underscore, it has mostly not engaged at any depth with men and masculinities. In the following chapter, Tevvi Bullock examines another key policy field that engages with gender in conflict-affected areas, namely gender-transformative humanitarian action. Through a careful analysis of key documents in the humanitarian field, Bullock lays out clearly how masculinities are presented as simplistic dichotomies of negative versus positive masculinities, the lack of intersectionality, the comparative lack of engagement with femininities, as well as the absence of critical self-reflection on the patriarchal underpinnings and power imbalances in the humanitarian sector.

Following these two critical analyses of policy frameworks, the next three chapters examine how masculinities play out and the work that they do in the spaces and processes in which such policies are formulated and implemented. First, Hannah Wright takes a close look at how 'gentleman-bureaucrat masculinities' and particular modes of thinking and acting associated with them are reified and reproduced in national security policymaking in the United Kingdom, by men and women alike. Next, Ray Acheson reflects on their extensive experience of engaging with international disarmament negotiations to highlight how dominant binary, heteronormative, and masculinist mindsets are in these processes and how this impacts policy development and formulation. Róisín Read's chapter examines a further set of masculinities at the core of defining and implementing policies relevant to conflict-affected societies, namely those of humanitarian aid workers, drawing on memoirs written by these. The final two chapters of this section examine the possibilities, challenges, and gaps of implementing gender-responsive peacebuilding policies that incorporate a critical masculinities perspective in practice. Marisol Ortiz-Acosta and Germán Otálora-Gallego offer us a close and critical reading of the Colombian Truth Commission's Final Report and how it engages with different masculinities, including of diverse SOGIESC, and with the impacts of the decades of war on men. Ortiz-Acosta and Germán Otálora-Gallego use this analysis to reflect on the possibilities this opens up and the obstacles that exist for gender-transformative transitional justice. In the next chapter, Kara Ann Hooser explores how the WPS agenda is being implemented in Burundi, how masculinities are – or are not – included, and

how many of the approaches are anchored in Euro-centric assumptions and paradigms. As an alternative, Hooser showcases locally articulated alternatives which draw on Burundian rather than externally imposed understandings of gendered peacebuilding.

### ***Part 5: Civilian masculine gender norms in the aftermath of conflict***

In the next part, the authors centre on the interplay between violent conflict and its aftermath and civilian masculine gender norms, expectations, and performances. Kristine Baekgaard, Olivia Shoemaker, and Robert U. Nagel open this section with quantitative and qualitative study on women's and men's attitudes to gender equality and gender norms in Aceh, Indonesia. The chapter examines the cumulative impacts on social norms emerging from decades of war, the destruction wrought by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and of a stricter implementation of Islamic shariah law in the autonomous region. Next, Jerker Edström, Amon Ashaba Mwiine, and David N. Tshimba examine political and societal developments in post-conflict Uganda through a critical masculinities lens. They carefully analyse how masculinities are connected to the current backlash against gender equality and inclusive justice in the country, aiming to anchor a patriarchal 'relative peace.' Jane Kelly's chapter takes us to a context of protracted structural, economic, armed, and physical violence in the Cape Flats of South Africa. Drawing on former gang members' narratives of transformation, Kelly examines how some men seek to move away from criminal violence and how this relates to their sense of manhood.

The next three chapters continue, in different ways, with the theme of re-thinking and transforming masculinities. First, Felix Maia, Nivea Saldanha, and Julia Scharinger draw on their work with men and gender-diverse persons in Timor-Leste to contemplate the emergence of counter-hegemonic masculinities in a societal context marked by the veneration of former independence guerrillas. Maia, Saldanha, and Scharinger pay close attention to how different factors such as age, childhood role models, urban versus rural settings, socio-economic class, exposure to alternate discourse on gender, or sexual orientation and gender identity play in opening ways of rethinking what it means to be a man in a society marked by the long shadows of colonialism, occupation, and war. Next, Hannah Russell and Liv Gaborit explore the potentially profound shifts in gender norms, in particular around the concept of *hpon* (or 'masculine power'), which have come to the fore in Myanmar in the aftermath of the 2021 military coup d'état and the armed and unarmed resistance against it. While the Myanmar military seeks to reimpose its patriarchal and heteronormative vision on society, many in the opposition are explicitly questioning the norms underpinning this vision and finding creative ways to use the military's own gendered conceptions against it. Lastly, Q Manivannan, in their chapter, takes a different, queer approach to reimagining masculinities. Using Danish Siddiqui's photographs of a protest in India as a starting point, Manivannan invites us to reconsider framings of masculinities and violence.

### ***Part 6: Transforming masculinities in conflict-affected settings***

The final part of the handbook continues with the theme of transforming masculinities in conflict-affected contexts but focuses more on interventions and programmes specifically designed to engage with men and masculinities. In the opening chapter of this section, Chloé Lewis, Alfred Banga Lumpali, Chloé Bazubuhe, Rebecca Bora Shirubute, Benediction Kimathe, and Jean Mukengere draw on their work evaluating a faith-based pilot intervention designed to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The authors reflect on the

possibilities opened up by faith-based approaches in a context marked by deep religiosity but also on some of the limitations of this work and on the at-times paradoxical role of faith in this respect. Engaging with similar work in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, Mercy Masta and Sister Lorraine Garasu, in their chapter, afford the reader a deeper look into the work of a church-affiliated civil society programme aiming to work with transforming conflict-affected and often violent masculinities. The authors chart both the transformative journeys the men have embarked upon and the resistances they have encountered within their broader community and the ways in which the programme also seeks to ensure the men's accountability to broader goals of women's empowerment and gender equality. In the following chapter, Ursula Mosqueira examines work done with former political prisoners, many of them torture survivors, in El Salvador. The chapter uses the authors' research with trauma healing work conducted with women and men who were imprisoned to examine how internalised gender norms and expectations shape the engagement with these programmes. Continuing with the focus on gender norms and trauma healing, Henny Slegh, Gary Barker, Aloys Mahwa, and Benoit Ruratotoye showcase the work of the Living Peace Institute in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Through a gender-sensitive, trauma-informed approach, LPI seeks to support civilians, ex-combatants, and security-sector personnel to cope with trauma and reduce levels of violence. In a fitting coda to both the section and the handbook, Dean Peacock, Laura Pascoe, Patrick Welsh, and Angelica Pino draw on their decades of experience of working on transforming masculinities to make an impassioned plea. While recognising the very real changes brought about by the work of transforming masculinities on an individual, family, and sometimes community level, the authors call for a much more ambitious, structural approach to countering militarised masculinities and mobilising men for feminist peace.

### **Ways forward**

This handbook is the result of collective efforts and collaboration guided by feminist research practices and ideals. The reader will notice that the contributions included in this volume stem from a rich diversity of perspectives, positionalities, localities, professional backgrounds, and career stages – ranging from practitioners and policymakers to early-career researchers and more established voices in the field. The process of curating these diverse voices and perspectives and bringing them into conversation has undoubtedly made for an enriching process for us as editors and fundamentally shape the scope and depth of this handbook.

As editors, we remain committed to the goal of this handbook project of centring and diversifying critical engagement with especially civilian masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding settings and uphold the urgency and importance of these endeavours. Confronted with the omnipresence of violence and militarism globally (Enloe, 2017), intellectual and activist attempts to understand, complicate, critique, and ultimately undo the various intersections between gender, masculinities, violence, conflict, and peace are essential. Militarism is on the rise everywhere and permeates our lives, including in academia and publishing, as also noted in the chapter on Myanmar. Many of the institutions we work with have been or are complicit in upholding gendered and racial inequalities and militarisation globally, at times directly but more often indirectly, including through funding, research collaborations, financial investments, and corporate ties. The critical insights that the contributions included in this volume bring forward are needed to equip students, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with a nuanced understanding of how to engage with and address these dynamics, and they remain needed as sources of inspiration and hope in insecure times. We pose these contributions, thus, as an invitation for further conversation, exploration, and, crucially, activism and action for dismantling patriarchy and building peace.

Many of the chapters in this handbook are ground-breaking in their own fields and/or the regions they cover, creating new possibilities and pathways for future research. We hope that we will inspire others to join us in thinking critically, intersectionally, and relationally about masculinities in armed conflict and peacebuilding, thereby contributing to finding solutions to gender inequality and the violences of heteronormativity and patriarchy as well as militarism.

### Note

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