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*Grado en Relaciones Internacionales*

Trabajo Fin de Grado

**A FEMINIST APPROACH TO  
SECURITY STUDIES:  
MASS RAPE AS A WEAPON OF WAR  
THE CASE OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA 1991-1995**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The historical lack of concern about wartime sexual violence on women in the international arena has led many scholars to research on this topic, which is starting to become a public security issue. Moreover, feminist theories and critical approaches to security studies are gaining influence in the International Relations field. From a gender perspective, this paper intends to make a review of the existent literature of International Relations' studies that use a feminist perspective to conduct their analysis about and, sexual violence and the use of mass rape as a weapon of war. In our case we will focus on the war of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1991-1995), where Serbs combatants are thought by a great number of academics, experts and researchers to have used the brutality of mass rapes during the conflict to demoralize and destroy the Muslim community, to further expel them from the Bosnian territory. At the same time, women that had been raped, in many cases until pregnancy as part of the planned strategy, were rejected from their families and social environment. This means they were doubly humiliated worsening the consequences. The aim of the paper is, therefore, to explore how mass rapes constitute a strategy of war used, in this case, by the Serbs during the Bosnian conflict, as well as the implications they had for victims, for aggressors and for the discipline. Is deliberate mass rape used as a tactic of war? Is sexual violence taken into consideration by security studies? Is there a gender perspective when analyzing these crimes? Has it been denounced in international politics?

## **KEY WORDS**

International security, feminist theories, gender, sexual violence, mass rape, conflict studies, war, Bosnia-Herzegovina

## **RESUMEN**

La tradicional falta de preocupación acerca de la violencia sexual contra las mujeres en tiempos de guerra ha llevado en los últimos años a investigar sobre este tema, que se está empezando a convertir en un asunto de seguridad pública. Las teorías críticas y los estudios feministas de seguridad internacional han aumentado su popularidad dentro de las Relaciones Internacionales. Desde una perspectiva feminista, este trabajo busca realizar una revisión de literatura de los estudios sobre el uso de la violencia sexual y de la violación masiva como arma de guerra. La presente investigación relaciona los conceptos e ideas extraídos de la revisión de literatura con el análisis del caso de la guerra de Bosnia-Herzegovina entre 1991-1995. En este conflicto los combatientes serbios deliberaron una estrategia para destruir a la comunidad musulmana de Bosnia basada en la violación en masa a mujeres, en muchos casos hasta quedar embarazadas. Las consecuencias tanto para las mujeres violadas como para la comunidad fueron terribles, y dificultaron la reconciliación de un pueblo víctima de una violencia brutal. Finalmente, el objetivo de este trabajo es explorar el empleo de la violación masiva como arma de guerra que destruye no solo la integridad de las personas, sino también el tejido social de las comunidades. El caso de la guerra de Bosnia supuso un paso adelante para incluir las violaciones en periodo de guerra como parte del discurso de seguridad. ¿Se analizan estos crímenes desde una perspectiva de género?

## **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Seguridad internacional, teorías feministas, género, violencia sexual, violación masiva, estudios de conflicto, guerra, Bosnia-Herzegovina

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B-H	–	Bosnia-Herzegovina
CEDAW	–	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
EU	–	European Union
ECOSOC	–	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GBV	–	Gender-based violence
GDP	–	Gross Domestic Product
HR	–	Human Rights
IC	–	International Community
IR	–	International Relations
ICTR	–	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	–	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
OHCHR	–	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG	–	Sustainable Development Goal
SIPRI	–	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	–	United Nations
UNSCR	–	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WB	–	World Bank
WHO	–	World Health Organization

**NOTE**

*The present research study has followed the indications provided by the UNESCO in its manual about how to use the language in a non-sexist and inclusive way.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The manual can be found online in the Digital Library of the UNESCO web page: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114950>

## **PART I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Topic's background and context**

*“gender equality is not an optional extra  
but essential for the maintenance of international peace and security”*

Davies *et al.* (2017: p.1)

Being at the core of the fundamental human rights, gender equality is still a pending subject all over the world. Even today millions of women continue suffering gender-based discrimination expressed in the form of lack of political, civil and social rights; unequal life opportunities; unequal access to work and resources; the glass ceiling and glass walls effect; harming gender stereotypes; lack of sexual and reproductive health, and insecurity founded on gender-based violence (from now on GBV), which encompasses sexual harassment, rape, abuses, forced and early marriage, genital mutilation, sexual enslavement, trafficking, forced prostitution, etc. (UN Women, 2018).

Although the severity of discrimination against women varies depending on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, economic status or immigrant status (Davies *et al.*, 2017; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2019), it is still overwhelmingly present in our daily lives all across the world.

The World Bank states that such discrimination is addressed both in developing and developed states, specifically in every society where economic conditions and social atmosphere, as well a culture and traditional practices, leave a particular group much worse than other. These mixed conditions result in higher “man-made” vulnerabilities that disproportionally affect women and girls’ lives preventing them from their full participation in society (Quijada, 2019). With regards to these vulnerabilities, GBV arises as one of the strongest sources of female insecurity, which knows no economic or social boundaries, affecting women and girls with very diverse backgrounds. In fact, GBV results in considerable costs for the future. Affecting 1 out of 3 women during lifetime, it is estimated to cost in some countries an average of 3,7% of the GDP, twice as much of what states spend on education programs (World Bank [WB], 2018).

Defined as a global pandemic by the WB, it constitutes a basic long-term challenge in the sense that its eradication is fundamental to achieve sustainable social and economic

development (UN Economic and Social Council, [ECOSOC] 2017). Additionally, hindering women's rights and dignity paralyses the progress towards an inclusive and non-discriminatory world. In this respect, raising awareness in recent years has contributed to addition of the fight against GBV in international agendas of organisms like the EU, the WB, the IMF, the UN<sup>2</sup>, many development institutions and several national-state plans.

Gender equality and the elimination of violence against women has turned into a candent topic, focus of numerous social policies and initiatives. It is key to elevate the standard of living of women, it grants a wider degree of freedom and security to citizens, it contributes to sustainable development, it increases the level of peace within a society and it comprises the first step towards global security, protection of human rights, democracy and competitive economic growth (UN Economic and Social Council, [ECOSOC] 2017; Government of Canada, 2017; European Commission, 2018).

However, and despite increasing fight against violence, fight for the respect to HR and tremendous advocacy and political feminist activism, GBV still comprises one of the most pervasive HR violations in the world today, particularly in conflicts, migrations and militarized situations, where women become more vulnerable to abuses. Under these circumstances, violence against women, especially sexual violence, has remained for centuries, to the face of citizens denied and hidden, but internally tolerated, justified and exploited.

Violence against women in situations of conflict, civil unrest and displacement, is a concerning huge threat to the world's security. Studies about this issue have boosted with the increasing number of female scholars entering in recent years the discipline of International Relations (IR), commonly known as very masculine and elitist. In fact, feminist academics are rising their voices to claim for social justice. They denounce the underrepresentation of women in many areas of expertise (for instance, international security and conflict studies), and the permanent distance of IR with gender issues, and women's lives, experiences, and insecurities.

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<sup>2</sup> The United Nations SDG program for 2030 include in its fifth goal "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", aimed at eliminating every gender-based discrimination (UN Economic and Social Council, [ECOSOC] 2017).

Particularly, research on wartime rape and the use of rape as a weapon of war (even a tool of genocide in some cases), has brought to light a delicate matter that has uncovered brutal behaviors of miserable treatment based on violence against women, especially founded on sexual abuses, gang rapes, tortures, sexual slavery, and prostitution. Together with HR organizations, NGOs, and others, these studies broke the silence towards invisible rape crimes, and, above all, the suffering of millions of women.

In this regard, the 2018 Peace Nobel Prize became an opportunity to speak up for sexual violence and mistreatment of women. The Prize was awarded to the Congolese gynecologist Denis Mukwege, a doctor who has devoted his whole life to help victims of sexual violence in wars, and Nadia Murad, a Kurdish Yazidi rights activist in Iraq who survived to the hell of sexual slavery by ISIS. This was a recognition for their struggle to finish off with use of sexual violence, abuses and terror as a weapon of war in armed conflict (The Nobel Prize, 2018). Such an acknowledgment has helped to bring attention to those crimes and to raise awareness among the international community.

On the one hand, as a saver, and on the other, as a victim, both award-winners have given voice to the issue contributing to promote visibility of war-time sexual crimes, that have for too long been hidden and silent HR violations (Amnesty International, 2004). In relation with this issue, one of the messages delivered in their acceptance speeches was that no impunity should be given to the perpetrators in order to make them accountable for their crimes, which is a crucial step in the confrontation of this systematic violence. The granting of this award sends a strong message to the world showing that sexual violence is not a private or personal issue, but an extended practice by which women are raped, mutilated, humiliated, sexually abused, forced to marriage and converted into sexual slaves, if not killed (Amnesty International, 2004).

Regarding the text structure, the present research has been divided into four interconnected sections. The first part encompasses the state of art and the theoretical framework. In this section, state-of-the-art of the scientific question will be exposed, as well as the diverse research studies previously undertaken about the topic. In this same division, different theories, mainly of international security and gender studies, will be exposed to explain key concepts and ideas, and how are they explained and applied by different scholars. In the second part, the purpose of the study, together with the questions

I would like to answer will be exposed. Besides, the methodology used to undertake the research will be described. At a later stage, the single-case study will be analyzed and discussed, examining why did it constitute a war against women and why did it comprise a genocidal act. This part will serve as linkage between the theoretical approaches and concepts, and a real experience. Finally, the conclusions extracted from the analysis will be summarized answering the research question and describing the theoretical implications of the results found.

## 1.2 Motivations and purpose of the text

In such a turbulent period of history, feminists are rising their voices to claim for social justice and to denounce the existence of (sexual) violence against women, and the social discrimination that women suffer. During 2018 and 2019, immense civil -especially female- mobilizations have occurred worldwide, such as the *#MeToo* movement, the women's march against Trump in the US or against Bolsonaro in Brazil, the “*Yo sí te creo*” and the women's day march in Spain, mobilizations to legalize abortion in Argentina or to fight judicial sexism in Ireland, and even institutional claims such as *#HeForShe* from UN Women. These mobilizations, that are thought to be humbly altering the world's future path, are shaking up the atmosphere of passivity, social conformism and political immobility towards the matter of gender inequality. Besides, they show that this sort of violence is universal and the outcome of unequal power relations.

Beyond this, also personal motivations support this work. The selection of this topic is partly motivated by the practically inexistent gender perspective in the educational program of IR. Specifically, in this field the feminist theory has played a major role on challenging the *status quo* of power relations in the international arena and the traditional paradigms that have for years dominated security studies, leaving women in second level. I believe this has contributed to isolate sexual violence at wartime and female experiences in conflict situation from the learning of students, reducing the visibility of those crimes.

To sum up, the purpose of this research is to address the concern of the brutal use of mass rape as a weapon of war from a gender perspective, using a real case to exemplify the mechanisms to execute the violence and the purpose of such attacks.

## **PART II. STATE OF ART AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 State of art**

Feminist theories of IR have attempted to deconstruct the traditional dominant narratives and perspectives in order to produce an alternative theory with new meanings and interpretations by bringing gender into the centrality of the issues (Villarroel, 2007; Tamang, 2016). The main claim or vindication of IR feminists is that gender issues should be seen as part of the discipline, even as a category of analysis (Tickner, 1992), since the world can no longer afford to keep marginalizing female voices, experience and knowledge (Lee Koo, 2002; Tamang, 2016). Back in the late 80s, when questions about states and citizens in areas such as economy, development or HR began to arise, scholars began to bring up the feminist theory into the IR discipline, which would very lightly start including gender issues into the political arena (Tickner, 2004). Up to that stage, “international relations has failed to theorise on gender” (Brown, 1988; p.461).

Besides, the fact that both gender issues and women had never been analyzed or examined by theorists of social sciences in general, and of IR in particular, became a reason for female scholars to carve out the corresponding space in the scholarship. Furthermore, this silent situation of gender matters is explained because of the lack of women theorizing, in other words, because of the absence of women in global politics (Brown, 1988).

This would explain that claims of female scholars were firstly aimed to defend “the right to theorise to all women” (Lee Koo, 2002; p.527), which would allow to produce inclusive, diverse, fair and real knowledge. Inevitably, this would help mainly to three aspects: i) provide a complete picture of the world (Narain, 2014), ii) to put an end to the large invisibility of half of the world’s population, iii) to allow women to bring new issues into the security agenda of states and institutions.

In fact, over the last twenty years, study and data collection over the consequences of gender inequality on international peace and war boosted unprecedentedly, as well as the interests of a number of scholars in the relationship between gender inequality and conflict (Davies *et al.*, 2017). Tickner already stated in her famous reformulation of Hans Morgenthau’s principles that “international Politics is a man’s world” (Tickner, 1988;

p.429), demanding the need of feminist voices to transform security and power conceptions, and demanding a change, which starts by making clear that international peace and security will never be achieved without gender equality (Davies *et al.*, 2017).

Nevertheless, and although increasing contributions, gender and feminist issues, as well as knowledge gained from women's experiences, continue to be seen, unfortunately, as secondary in the discipline (Tamang, 2016; Narain, 2014), as a result of a social system called patriarchy that for decades no-one has challenged.

Some scholars highlight that much less literature has been produced and fewer attention have been paid to security studies in relation with gender, war and conflict (Tickner, 2004), one of the main categories where Feminism has challenged every conventionalism of the Realist paradigm raising new areas of analysis.

In this branch, while traditional security studies have focused on analyzing the conflict from a structural perspective and seeing power as a domination tool (Lozano Vázquez, 2012), feminist scholars have managed to concentrate on how global politics affect women and the impacts that war has on their lives and bodies, basically examining what goes on during such conflicts.

Only within the recent past has received increasing attention the link between GBV and military-armed conflicts (Manjoo & McRaith, 2011). Additionally, Security Studies have begun to take gender-related issues on board, including mass rape (Hansen, 2001). In this regard, experts on gender and conflict denounce that even less attention has been paid to women's bodies at conflict, since this topic is not well documented in war literature. Besides, the mainstream international politics has managed to keep silence over sexual crimes and rape at wartime (Lee Koo, 2002).

Feminists have challenged the stereotypical myth that "wars are fought to protect women" and have drawn the attention to discriminatory practices such as military prostitution or rape at war (Tickner, 2004). Regarding the latter, women are –and have since long ago been– primary and easy targets of massacres in wars, particularly being victims of mass rapes in conflict zones. Lee Koo (2002: p.525) literally states that "war rape is as old as war itself".

There are countless examples of conflicts in which rape has been used as a strategy to fight. For instance: the war of southern Mexico –Ciudad Juárez–, in Burundi, Algeria, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Somalia, Chechnya, East Timor, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Angola, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Rwanda, Uganda, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Sudanese war, the Syrian war, Japan and the ironically labelled comfort women, the genocide against the Jewish and the conflict on the former Yugoslavia, especially the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (further on B-H), which in this paper will be used as the case study (Goldstein, 2001; Lee Koo, 2002; WHO, 2002; Amnesty International, 2004; Buba, 2015).

Furthermore, sexual violence on the part of the Burmese military in the Rohingya conflict, or mass rape, sexual enslavement and trafficking on the part of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, uncover the devastating reality that women and girls still suffer at present times. The persistence and brutality of sexual violence and abuses in ongoing conflicts unveil all what remains to be done until these crimes are firmly approached and effectively prosecuted and stopped. Indeed, the impressive number of cases reveals that, in the same way that gender inequality is a universal evil, the use of mass rape in conflict is universal too; a social scourge that needs to be recognized and fought through political and legal institutions. Cited in McGlynn (2008), MacKinnon (2006) developed this idea by stating that it is mainly because of gender discrimination why rape exists and, since it comprises a social problem fostered by education, media, economics and culture, it is the state (or its institutions) who needs to show no passivity and tolerance towards this violation of rights and dignity of women by punishing it.

Feminist researchers have denounced this reality, and more than a few have focused their studies on particular cases, especially: Rwanda, Bosnia, Bangladesh, DRC or Sudan. They have studied rape as a tool to terrorize women (Tickner, 2004), and have explained the logic behind treating women as mere “property” and their bodies as something that can be conquered. Researchers have condemned that wartime rape is widely committed and seldom denounced, and that perpetrators enjoy widespread amnesty for their crimes –also denounced by the UNSCR 1820 (UN Women, 2017)–. For decades or even centuries, rape as a private crime has been hugely assumed because it is so commonplace and remains the least condemned war crime (MacGlynn, 2008).

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

Throughout this section various concepts and ideas will be explained using as references different IR and Social Sciences theories that expose their interpretations of security, war, rape, and others.

Since in Security Studies, as well as in Gender Studies, there are multiple theories, this paper will only go into detail of a number of approaches, as an exhaustive discussion of these contributions is not possible here. Besides, this will help reduce the scope of the theorization, which will allow to be clearer in the explanations.

### *2.2.1 Traditional vs. critical theories of security*

Security can be a greatly contested concept depending on the view one is using to analyze it and also because of the diversity of its nature (Williams, 2008). First of all, it is crucial to point out the main difference between traditional and critical (newer) approaches to security studies, in order to later understand what the claims of feminism are, with regards to the security concept.

On the one hand, traditional paradigms sustain that states are the primary entities of the international system (state-centrism), and thus, security threats concern national security and national territory, defining clear state boundaries. This led to the assumption made by realists that states themselves comprise threats to the security of other states; henceforth, their goal is the survival in the anarchic international system and the protection of the state from confrontation with others. This confrontation is understood as war, which appears to be the major threat against national security.

In line with this, the realist paradigm highlights the relevance of strength and power – especially military– attributed to states and its foreign and defense policies. In fact, inherited from well-known authors, for instance, Machiavelli or Hobbes, political realism has reigned the international sphere during the XX<sup>th</sup> century thanks to personalities like Kissinger, Waltz, Carr or Morgenthau, who defended the struggle for power in international politics. Buzan highlights Waltz's observation that "in anarchy, security is the highest end" (Buzan, 1983; p.12). Actually, the realist orthodoxy of state behavior

made sense during a period of a high polarized environment practically until the end of the Cold War (Buzan, 1983; Tickner, 1992).

As a matter of fact, other school of thinking arose realizing that such concept of security was too narrow to address insecurities outside the nation-state boundaries. In fact, branding it as an “underdeveloped concept of security”, authors like Buzan, Hoffman or Ashley asked for a redefinition of the term making it less reductionist (Buzan, 1983).

Yet, disputing the traditional realist paradigm, critical theories recognize the relevance of newer identified actors, namely international organizations, individual armed groups, civil movements, etc., and defend the need to broaden the scope of security to include new type of threats. Critical theories of international studies are based on the criticism of normalized standards and concepts. They seek to question the validity of rooted conventionalisms defended by traditional dominant discourses, like realism, which denies power-based relationships because of convenience (Lee Koo, 2002). Moreover, these approach rejects the understanding of security as a synonym of power because it turns problematic in wider systems. In line with this, scholars belonging to the Copenhagen School also placed considerable emphasis on the concept of power relations and the limitations of traditional definitions of security (Mackenzie, 2010). In fact, during the last decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, a reaction against realist thinkers awoke from the economic crisis. Given the increasing importance of the political economy in the world order, realism started to become irrelevant once that the interconnection and interdependence between states made obsolete the view of states as individual sources of power. Besides, military considerations were put in the background of state’s policies (Buzan, 1983).

Critical theories of security studies propose a multi-layered concept of security and argue that everything about what traditional theories talk might be real and true, but it is a limited view that dismissed the interaction between other actors of society, for instance, citizens. In particular, thanks to this approach the security of individuals in relation with social threats came into political debate: people might find themselves installed in an inhabitable or unsocial atmosphere, under which they may suffer physical threats (injuries, death), economic threats (denial of property, work, or resources), environmental threats, or in which their rights as citizens are under political threat (imprisonment, no civil liberties, public humiliation) (Buzan, 1983).

Nevertheless, and although Buzan had been acclaimed as a well-recognized security intellectual, gaps on his works were found by feminists, who realized the lack of consideration to gender and the derived insecurities for women. This is one of the reasons why feminist scholars claim the need to introduce gender as a variable under study in IR security studies (Tickner, 1992). Other scholars like Hansen put emphasis on the building a relation between gender and security discourses (Mackenzie, 2010).

Recently, other IR scholars (e.g. Williams, 2008) underscore the focus maintained by Buzan on scientific methods, something that has also been highlighted by feminist scholars like Brown (1988), who emphasized that critical theories of social sciences, in this case, of the branch of IR, reject the orthodoxy of dominant empiro-analytic discourses that tend to focus on scientific facts dismissing social processes by which social relations are created (Brown, 1988). In this regard, realist discourses have focused on the approach to knowledge from an empirical point of view, meaning that theory is developed according to what is observed (Waltz, 1979 cited in Lee Koo, 2002). The focus on facts and knowledge have derived on questioning more easily testimonies of rape victims. This has led to the supremacy of the “rationalization of international politics”. In the case of raped women, their experiences in war have for too long not been considered in the war literature; besides, the value of the proof relies on the testimony of women themselves, which is also rejected because of not being technical or scientific facts. Considering rape as unfortunate but not political, inevitably shows the lack of a gender perspectives in the analysis of these situations (Lee Koo, 2002).

Another discussion among scholars (e.g. Buzan, Weaver, Wilde, Williams) has been the question about what the path to securitize an issue is, and what matters are to be securitized. First of all, they presented “*securitization*” being the portrait of an issue as an existential threat, which requires urgent measures even outside the standard limits of politics. The meaning provided by Buzan *et al.*, (1998) of an international security problem is the following: a matter considered to be more important than other issues which should take absolute priority. Securitizing violence against women and sexual violence would mean addressing it as an urgent matter, acknowledging its importance and recognizing it as a threat. In line with this, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR, 2019) warns about the implicit risks in overlooking the hazards to which women are exposed under situations of violence.

### *2.2.2 Feminist approach to security*

Feminism in IR arose in the margins of the discipline questioning traditional concepts and methods. Back in the 80s, feminist scholars started to denounce that “international politics is a man’s world” (Tickner, 1988; p.429) and started to vindicate the negative role of gender hierarchies and stereotypes. IR feminism wanted to go beyond gender dichotomies to construct a more real and inclusive definition of peace and security including gender-related insecurities (never before considered) (Rodríguez Manzano, 2015).

The area of security studies remains one of the most contested grounds where feminist theories have constantly highlighted the gendered aspect of a state-centric security discourse (Tamang, 2016). In fact, feminism has built a more people-centered approach, whose concerns of protection of human life from harm and preservation of dignity are closely related to the core aspects of Human Security.

For traditionalists there was no need to consider gender, or even minorities, when addressing security issues, only the state could suffer from an insecure situation. Additionally, classical realist approaches fail to understand the meaning of wartime rape, labelling it as an individual problem understood to be a natural and inevitable component of war. Realists do not recognize a collective insecurity problem emanating from rape, reason why it is not considered a security concern but and private problem.

On the contrary, feminist theories denounce unequal balance of power relations and how power is assumed or distributed, sometimes very related to military activities and armed conflict situations. In fact, belonging to the same family of feminist theories that at the same time lie under the umbrella of critical theories, liberal and radical feminism have different interpretations of the origins of women’s subordination in the world.

Liberal feminism considers gender inequality as a violation of liberal values -liberty, equality and justice-, and its main purpose is the application of principles equally to women and men. That would be the solution to women’s oppression in the world, which, on the other hand, is absolutely rejected by radical feminism, a category that sustains that liberal feminism has failed to explain the basis of gender inequality. Moreover, liberal feminists sustain that restrictions over women’s lives have been irrationally placed over us (Brown, 1988).

Radical feminism, on the other hand, holds that the former theory has misrecognized the basis of women's subordination. Radical feminists depart from the assumption that a system called patriarchy was culturally constructed creating a gendered and unequal society and conditioning structures and processes that generate such subordination of one group with respect to the other. The essence of radical feminism with regards to IR is that it sustains that patriarchy plays a role at state level (Brown, 1988), contributing to the systemic discrimination of women through its tolerance to gender inequality and through the lack of acknowledgement of gendered insecurities (Davies *et al.*, 2017).

Besides, one of the most remarkable developments of the feminist theory in the condemnation of violence against women started back in the 60s and 70s when American radical feminists started to expand the revolutionary motto "Personal is Political" (Varela, 2013). From then on, feminist theorists such as Like Kate Millet started to rewrite such motto in their texts to question the private-public division of power and denounce GBV, including sexual violence.

To counter the classical realist view which naturalizes rape at war and mutilation of women's bodies as part of common military fare at war<sup>3</sup>, feminists have strived to raise visibility over this issue and take it from the domestic sphere to the international political realm. Being made "invisible" and naturalized in society has made the situation worsen, since women turn out to be more prone to suffer political, social and institutional discrimination under this condition of vulnerability. Actually, it increases the risk of females being target of any form of violence or domination, specifically in situations of greater unrest or conflict (Varela, 2013; Davies *et al.*, 2017). As a result, higher levels of sexual violence and abuses are recorded in wars and military conflict.

After having explained that critical theories seek to rethink the definition of security provided by realist theorists, we find that, if the maxim "personal is political" is applied to security studies, it could be read as a demand to the state to consider rape a source of state-wide and international insecurity, and not a social matter. This implies taking into account individuals as subjects and not only states (state-centric view).

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<sup>3</sup> The quote of the American General George S. Patton during World War II represents this tolerance to war rape: "there would unquestionably be some raping" (cited in Lee Koo, 2002).

### 2.2.3 GBV and sexual violence

*“Conflict-related sexual violence is as destructive as any bomb or bullet.”*

Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary-General

Being a universal problem of gigantic proportions, GBV is the “maximum expression of power that men intend to execute over women” (Varela, 2013; p.255). It actually constitutes an instrument of intimidation and humiliation and represents a tool of strength and power, product of patriarchal systems that subordinates women with respect to men (Tolulope, 2013).

GBV covers different forms of violence that has its origins in the disrespect to HR. Though violence against women can be expressed in form of beatings, coercion, murder, or psychological violence, special attention is paid to sexual violence, an extremely spread practice of submission to which women are even more exposed in conflict zones and situations. It includes sexual assaults, rapes, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced marriage, genital mutilations, etc. (Manjoo & McRaith, 2011). Enloe (2007) defends that the root of sexualized violence is militarism and militarization. This means that military practices become institutionalized in societies that have legitimized the use of violence even outside the war. Consequently, the rate of violence increases, including sexual abuses. Defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019):

[S]exual violence is a serious public health and human rights problem with both short- and long-term consequences on women's physical, mental, and sexual and reproductive health. Whether sexual violence occurs in the context of an intimate partnership, within the larger family or community structure, or during times of conflict, it is a deeply violating and painful experience for the survivor

### 2.2.4 Theory behind mass wartime rape

Rape comprises a gender-based sexual crime predominately exercised by men against women as a form of masculine domination or control because of holding and inferior socio-cultural status. It comprises actually one of the utmost materializations of patriarchal oppression (McGlynn, 2008; Manjoo & McRaith, 2011), because it sexually destroys a woman based on her identity as woman (Copelon, 1998 cited in Lee Koo, 2002).

Pettman (1996) argues that rape during the war period comprises part of the competition between the parties and could be analyzed as a representation of supremacy and power. In other words, we could say that the bodies of women have a major role in such struggle for territory, power and influence

Besides, due to the existence of criticism in the Academia denouncing that great focus on female rapes obscures sexual humiliation of males (e.g. Carpenter, 2006), I consider important to mention that rape can also be committed against males, though this issue is not the matter of the present research, which actually explores imperious and abusive sexual violence committed over females during conflict period. In this context, one of the goals of this work is to exemplify that rape (more concretely, rape in armed conflict used as a weapon of war) constitutes just one of the forms of violence in which women suffer systemic and structural discrimination, subordination and disgrace in the world just for the fact of being women. Rape in armed conflict comprises even today one of the most frequent and horrific crimes committed to women.

Going back to the theoretical debate, unlike classical realism, the rising acknowledgement of rape as a security problem is based on the premise that wartime rape is a collective threat to the security of the nation, not only an individual threat. Originally, the exclusion of wartime rape from the security agendas of states relied upon the logic that rape was frequent and mundane at war (Hansen, 2001). In line with this argument, statist and militaristic conceptualizations of security, that are related with traditional doctrines, have fostered silence over the presence of sexual crimes and female victims in war. This form of theorizing has silent experiences of women, doing a great disservice in the visibility of such abuses and insecurities (Lee Koo, 2002).

But, are all rapes equally serious crimes? They really are, and they are equally heinous, the fact that society (commonly men) has managed to normalize them overtime, does not mean that rape committed during peacetime or at war spontaneously or during a conflict with a political aim have different statuses, precisely because they come from the same rooted problem of patriarchy and power. In fact, rapists do not necessarily need to be monsters or psychopaths, even though some of them are, since rape is not rare, rapists could be ordinary colleagues, old friends or family members.

Campbell notes that the identity of the rapist is not preordained. In the case of mass war rape, men do not become perpetrators specifically once the war is declared (Lee Koo, 2002).

However, the context and circumstances under which rapes occur can alter the degree of gravity if we take into account rape used in a particular setting to achieve an objective. For example, rape has been used in war for a long time; however, that usage of rape differs from the use of mass rape as a weapon of war, which implies a degree of complexity when it becomes a tactic to pursue a political objective, which could be the extinction of the population from one territory (ethnic cleansing) so as to annex it to other state.

More concretely, this not-isolated phenomenon was lately committed in B-H with the aim of exterminating the Muslim Bosnians. The strategy of ethnic cleansing based on mass rape developed by Serbian forces became a form of torture, political terror, domination and, finally, genocide. Though some analysts still find rare to add deliberate mass rape as a component of genocide, its use in Bosnia reveals it was a firm strategy of ethnic cleansing (Sharlach, 2000). Besides, the specific use of war mass rape by this group involved Muslim Bosnian and Croatian women, and both combatant and non-combatant women indistinctly (Lee Koo, 2002).

The war for the eradication of Bosniaks<sup>4</sup> turned a war fought through women's bodies as an attack to the others state, culture, ethnicity and religion (Lee Koo, 2002). For this reason, some authors (see MacKinnon) use the term "genocidal rape", which refers to systematic and known abuses (mass rapes) that constitute torture and are driven by a political motive tolerated by the state (though it is not the direct perpetrator).

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<sup>4</sup> The Muslim Bosnian collective is also referred to as the "Bosniak" (Todorova, 2011)

## **PART III. OBJETIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Objectives and questions to be answered**

The main goal of this research is to address sexual violence against women from a gender perspective taking into consideration non-traditional security approaches. Within the context of international relations, the research would be framed in the areas of international security studies and conflict studies.

Besides, in order to achieve the previously mentioned goal, a real case study will be explored, analyzing the use of mass rape as a tool of war during the armed conflict in B-H between 1991-1995. Two specific objectives will be pursued. The first one is to examine how the Serbs used mass rape as a war tool for ethnic cleansing. Secondly, the research seeks to show and denounce the planned campaign of violence against women, converting them in part of the battle camp.

### **3.2 Methodology**

This final degree paper comprises a study on the extended use of rape as a tactic and weapon of war during conflict. In order for this research paper to result more illustrative and useful, the theoretical approaches will be linked to the case under study.

To accomplish the work, a profound literature review has been undertaken. This kind of methodology allows the researcher to discuss and summarize information previously published about one topic by undertaking a documentary analysis. At the same time, the writer has the opportunity to refresh the information about the topic and to address new concepts that complement the existent literature.

As for references, the study does an overview of papers written by IR theorists, experts on security like Barry Buzan, and IR feminist academics such as Jacqui True, Ann Tickner or Sarah Brown. Apart from academic papers, further information and knowledge has been gathered from official documents and reports of institutional sources and (non)governmental institutions. Besides, written press articles have been used to include part of survivor's testimonies from the attacks and abuses.

## **PART IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDY**

### **4.1 Why does Bosnia-Herzegovina constitute an interesting case to study?**

As it has been previously explained, mass rape in wartime constitutes a universal tactic of war that has been carried out in numerous conflicts all over the world. Traditional paradigms of international security did not contemplate sexual violence victims as proper casualties of war. Rape at wartime was even considered a by-product of war.

Within all the conflicts that have been mentioned in foregoing paragraphs, the conflict in B-H has been selected to conduct the single-case study analysis because of having raised visibility of the systematic use of wartime rape in the international politics arena.

The delivered use of mass rape as a strategy of ethnic cleansing on the part of the Serbs (government officials, military and militias) in this conflict, brought the subject to the front of international and institutional condemnation. Moreover, the ICTY set a precedent in the recognition of rape in war as a crime against humanity and in the prosecution of perpetrators.

Additionally, in line with what some authors explain (Serra, 2019), we –Westerners– tend to think that horrendous crimes related to sexual violence are things of past times and that happen normally in other continents and civilizations, or that they are even product of other non-Christian religions. However, this case denies such thinking. The Yugoslavian Wars occurred in European territory no longer than 25 years ago. Currently, Serbia is one of the official candidates to join the UE. And the ethnic cleansing based on the brutality of mass rapes and forced impregnation against the Bosnians came from the side of the Orthodox Christian Serbs.

### **4.2 Context of conflict: war in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1991-1995**

In order to present the case study selected so as to analyze the use of mass rape in armed conflict as a weapon of war, first a brief description of the Bosnian war will be exposed. The former Yugoslavia was formed by the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, until 1991 when its popularity started

to decline after diverse secessionist movements from Slovenia and Croatia, escalating tensions and the economic crisis.

Prior to the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars, citizens with diverse ethnicities professing different religions had peacefully cohabitated for more than forty years, specifically in the territory of B-H. However, Serb nationalists, led by Milosevic and others, sought to adhere the Bosnian territory to the “Greater Serbia”.

They were successful at making essentialized groups within the diversity of the Bosnian society: the Muslims, the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Christian Serbs. This way, ethnicity and religion became signifiers of difference, especially in the case of the Muslims, who were thought to be either Serbs or Croats converted to Islam, or settled Turks, not original from Bosnia, and, thus, the perfect target to get rid of their Muslim heritage (Todorova, 2011).

Although reaching fix unanimity in consensus might be difficult regarding an issue like this one, researchers and academics do sustain that an ethnic cleansing campaign was held by the Serbs, and that the brutality against Muslim civilians in the early 1990s constitutes an act of genocide. Basically, sustained attacks on Bosniaks, for no other reason than being Muslim, were acts of extreme and brutal xenophobia that ended up in a terrible bloodshed authorized by military and government Serb officers (Sharlach, 2000; Sverdlov, 2017).

A total war against Muslim civilians erupted together with a particular war against Bosniak women. Serbs soldiers, combatants and militias started a planned campaign to rape Bosnian Muslim women. In this regard, observers do agree that there were official orders to perpetrate mass rapes, recognizing the use of rape as a tactic of war and hereby a tool of genocide and ethnic cleansing (Sharlach, 2000; Sverdlov, 2017).

Similarly, and to make a reference to the previously mentioned Nobel Peace Prize award-winner, the case of Nadia Murad comprises another illustration of use of rape at war as part of a genocidal campaign, in this case towards the Yazidi minority, whom Sunni extremist militants wanted to get rid of just as much as Serbian combatants with the Muslim population in B-H.

The Bosnian Muslim leadership felt betrayed by the IC, since the enforcement of the arms embargo on Bosnia, while the Bosnian Serb troops were being unobstructedly aided by Serbia. In addition to this, the feeling of betrayal was enlarged by the decision of the ICTY to hold both sides of the conflict equally accountable for the crimes. The Muslim community implied that the Serbs had been the greatest aggressors in the conflict (Todorova, 2011). In 1996 the UN Commission on Human Rights recognized that, though atrocities were committed by individuals belonging to both sides of the conflict, Bosnian Serbs held most of the attacks and violations of HR since the beginning of the conflict to exterminate every non-Serb. Such violations include: mass murder, disappearances, detentions, beatings, burning and looting houses, mass rape, torture and forcing individuals to flee their homes (OHCHR, 1996).

#### **4.3 Rape as a tactic and weapon of war: a war against women**

Mass rapes are used in wartime as a fighting tool to demoralize and terrify members of a community (Sharlach, 2000; UN Action, 2007). In the case of Bosnia, mass raping constituted a deliberate strategy and campaign deployed by the Serbian combatants (military forces and civilians) to ethnically cleanse Muslim Bosnians. The aim was to intimidate and terrorize the population in order to expel them from the territory and achieve the pursuit of a Greater Serbia (Hansen, 2001; Todorova, 2011).

Perpetrators and Serbian authorities have constantly denied the planification of a rape strategy to pursue ethnic cleansing, or the existence of rape directives. However, researchers and observers have found indicators that evidence special permission and tolerance towards sexual crimes and violence against women. Moreover, the majority of observers do agree that there were official orders to pursue a planned and systematic use of rape in the conflict (Sharlach, 2000). The same author (Sharlach, 2000) points out that rapes in different Bosnian territories had resembling characteristics, for instance, forcing family members to perform incest, or the unwritten consensus to rape first upper-class women. In turn, rapes happened simultaneously in different areas of Bosnia and always accompanied the fighting. Moreover, plentiful rapes occurred in official centers of detention (which turned into rape camps). In fact, such camps had an identical layout in

which “a rectangle of guards and minefields surrounded another rectangle where soldiers raped and inflicted other forms of torture” (Pelka, 1995 in Sharlach, 2000, p.97).

Despite denials, UN indictments of Bosnian and Serb war criminals included sexual charges. At the same time, testimonies from witnesses and doctors exercising in refugee camps have no doubt that mass rapes existed as part of the war system. Also, testimonies of survivors reveal that captors and rapists told their victims that their goal was to impregnate them. Victims confess the feeling that commanding officers were responsible for tolerance and passiveness (Sharlach, 2000).

In other words, the use of mass rape as a tool of war comprises not only a supremacist misogynist and racist act of violence and terror towards a particular individual, but it constitutes a form of collective terror to a whole population. According to exact words of MacKinnon (1994 cited in Sharlach, 2000):

It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they are dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to come back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told by others: rape as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide.

The UN Commission on HR holds that rape was used as a weapon of war in this context and is considered a war crime for which the committers and authorizers should be prosecuted and held accountable for justice (OHCHR, 1996).

Mukwege (2018) asserts that, unfortunately, war-time rape is able to displace thousands of civilians from their communities, provoking a demographic decline and, therefore, disintegrating the social fabric. This altogether turns war-time rape into a formidable weapon of war. Despite the fact that Dr. Mukwege talks about war-time rape out of his experience from the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, several parallelisms are found with the dynamic and use of mass rapes in the conflict of B-H. Indeed, the Congolese gynecologist highlights that it's a collective practice, not based on individual sexual impulses, but on deliberate means to debilitate, terrorizing and annihilating a population, in this case, based on ethnicity and religion. The existence of planned and

systematic rape in the B-H conflict has been researched by a tremendous number of academics, researchers, experts and even journalists.

Between 20,000 and 30,000<sup>5</sup> women are estimated survivors of wartime rape (Hansen, 2001; Lee Koo, 2002) and the figure of the sexually assaulted women could amount to 60,000 in Bosnia. Ethnically, Serbian combatants carried out systematic rape and gang-rape against Muslim and Croatian women in diverse locations, including streets, their own homes, school gymnasiums, hotels or in concentration camps, which were renamed as “rape camps” (Fisk, 1993; Sharlach, 2000; Stiglmayer, 2017). Ziba, a Muslim woman of two children confesses out of her experience: “the rapes went on day and night for a month” (Fisk, 1993).

When researching over mass rape as a weapon of war in Bosnia, it is sometimes read that Bosniak women were raped mainly due to two reasons: because of being Muslim – or of Muslim origin – and for being simply women. In the first case, it is clear, the category of Bosnian Muslim was politically and military the target for its eradication in the war, since ethnicity was at stake. For this reason, the Serbs’ aim was to destroy social cohesion and force displacements by establishing violence and horror. Mass rape was used with the aim to destruct an ethnic group. In the second case, it is a bit more complex since it involves secondary factors. Large-scale rapes were strategically used as weapons against women with the purpose of forced impregnation to create a new generation of Serbs while, little by little, cleansing the Muslim population (Stiglmayer, 2017). Apart from this, literature reveals that women were particularly targeted with massive rape in Bosnia to send an offensive message to Bosniak men (Hansen, 2001). Within their patriarchal and masculine language, this message communicated the humiliation of men who were failing to protect “their own women” and, therefore, their nation, becoming, thus, losers, inferior and weak (Sharlach, 2000; Hansen, 2001; Tolulope, 2013).

This shows that women’s bodies were perceived as the battle ground and as a tool to offend the enemy’s masculinity and honor, which was also at stake. In addition, such a behavior reveals the impressive “*objectualization*” of women that becomes a

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<sup>5</sup> The CEDAW report concludes that 25,000 women were raped during the Bosnian conflict. However, it specifies that the figure was quite difficult to obtain because of the conditions of the war and the amount of unreported crimes (CEDAW, 1994).

demonstration of male power; and like Card (1996) explains, wartime rape embodies an image of conquest in the sense that the bodies of women are understood as an object to offend the other party. In particular, wartime rape reflects incapacity of some men to protect their women, perceiving women as mere property.

During the years that lasted the Bosnian war, the front pages of international media were covered with news about the barbaric mass rape to Bosnian Muslim women, which became nearly viral (Hansen, 2001). This contributed to bring GBV into the public and political domain, and helped humanitarian intervention (El Jack, 2003). On the other hand, some authors highlight the role of the media focusing on the negative side. Allen (1996) cited in Hansen (2001) denounced in his book the large rumors saying that videocontent from the rapes of women in Bosnia were circulating internationally, which contributed to further humiliation of raped women in a sexualized way.

#### **4.4 Rape until pregnancy, a genocidal act**

*“We’re going to rape your women, and they will give birth to Serbian children”*  
Serbian graffiti in Mitrovica (Sharlach, 2000).

In such a traditional patriarchal society where the significance of women as mere national reproducers and where “fathers” were the ones marking the ethnicity of the newborns, Serbian nationalist forces built an extra-violent military strategy of forced impregnation by which Muslims would be cleansed at the same time of creating a future Serb generation (Todorova, 2011). This derivative of wartime mass rape had become a phenomenon not previously observed in other conflicts like Pakistan, Rwanda or Bangladesh (Sharlach, 2000).

In this context, cited in Hansen (2001), Allen (1996) stated that not even the Nazi Germans managed to design a plan to turn pregnancy into a weapon of annihilation, which also served to alter the biological and genetical traits of the coming generation.

Heartbreaking testimonies from survivor victims bring out that Chetnik<sup>6</sup> rapists would shout at their victims saying: “look at how many children you can have. Now you are

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<sup>6</sup> The Chetniks were the military members of the Serbian nationalist guerrilla, characterized by violent fighting for the Greater Serbian against Muslim and Croatian (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019).

going to have our children. You are going to have our little Chetniks” (Fisk, 1993). Research out of testimonies inquires that it was a repeated pattern. According to Burns (1992), a 15-year old reveals that at least 20 women were kept in a tiny room. Drunk and dirty Serbian fighters asked them to undress:

"We refused, then they beat us and tore our clothes off," the girl said. "They pushed us on the floor. Two of the men held me down while two others raped me. I shouted at them and tried to fight back but it was no use. As they raped me they said they'd make sure I gave birth to a Serbian baby, and they kept repeating that during the rest of the time that they kept me there."

Even in some cases women were taken into custody and imprisoned for months by rapists so as to avoid abortion after being raped (Burns, 1992; Sharlach, 2000). This way women became pregnant and had babies from the ethnicity of the rapist, the so-called “enemy babies”. Hence, they wouldn’t have babies from their own ethnicity (Muslim Bosnian) because their wombs were occupied by Serbs. Women’s reproductive will and capacity was cancelled by continued rape (Lee Koo, 2002).

In this line, the 1948 UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide specifies in Article II (section d) that one of the acts of genocide that intends to destroy the other group is to impose measures intending to prevent births within the group (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 1948). One can, hence, tell that raping until pregnancy and/or taking women into custody to prevent termination of pregnancy constitutes an act of genocide, since the intention is mainly to block or adulterate the community’s bloodline (Sharlach, 2000). This explanation would match with the definition that provided MacKinnon of the term “genocidal rape”<sup>7</sup>. The point behind this claim is to make a difference between the use of mass rape in war time, and the practice of repeated rape with the aim to force impregnation and destroy the other ethnic group. The latter is what constitutes an act of genocide.

Critics from academics (Carpenter, 2000) stand out arguing that the discourse of rape until pregnancy of women during conflict focuses too much on the impact on females and leaves in the periphery the children born of rape, who are as much as women denied in

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<sup>7</sup> The term “genocidal rape” is actually a highly contested concept among feminist scholars (McGlynn, 2011)

their own communities (Mukwege, 2018). Nevertheless, in this research children born from macabre rape practices are also considered victims of the crime. In addition, these children are considered key players on the consequences of rape at wartime because of their role in reconciliation, both at family and community level.

Serbian combatants used rape as a tactic of war to deliberately impregnate women from other ethnicities (Muslim and Croatian) causing disorder and chaos, and socially disturbing and breaking the other community. This tactic seems especially useful if we take into account the rejection of raped women in a community that stigmatizes rape and brings double hell to victims. Bosnian women were in some cases actually divorced from their husbands, expelled from their homes, rejected by their families, who begged to remain silent to avoid collective shame, and even killed, because the death of the dishonored family member would restore the family's honor in the community (Sharlach, 2000; Hansen, 2001).

Another appalling example of the brutality and inhumanity of mass rape is Rwanda, where during the 1994 war and genocide, the HIV virus was used as a weapon of war by Hutu rapists against Tutsi women. In this case, the ICTR ruled that “rapes committed in the service of armed conflict are not only war crimes, but also crimes against humanity and, in some instances, acts of genocide” (Sharlach, 2000; Donovan, 2002, p.17).

#### **4.5 Secrecy of violations of women's rights and dignity**

*“War rape is as old as war itself”*

Lee Koo (2002: p.525)

For centuries, rape has been so commonplace in the private sphere that it became socially normalized underestimating all the harm it causes. Cited in McGlynn (2008), MacKinnon (2006) states that defined by heritage of social structures, rape is neither random nor individual. In this respect, rape at wartime has been traditionally viewed as an excusable performance and an inevitable and uncontrollable product of armed conflict, considering it a “private crime” in war (Cohen, 2018).

On the awarding of the Peace Nobel Prize 2018, the director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Dan Smith, stated that for centuries has

rape existed in war, but it only existed as a crime in the shadows (Euractiv, 2018), becoming a public secret.

So as to counter secrecy, feminists have made great efforts transferring rape from the domestic and private sphere to the political realm, because if remaining silent and invisible, women would feel that their testimonies are unwanted. In fact, this is part of whether women's war experiences are included into national experience

#### **4.6 Does silence of mass rape help reconciliation in post-conflict Bosnian society?**

Some authors have placed the focus of their research on how the dignity of the victims could be restored, and whether reconciliation of Bosnians could be achieved.

Todorova (2011) highlights that reconciliation of a society that has suffered inter-community conflicts would require a balance between historical memory and a degree of forgetting acts of war in order to restore cohabitation and cicatrize wounds of the victims. However, the fact that some events occurred at wartime are completely omitted, forgotten, not pronounced and kept secret is equally dangerous. In the case of Bosnia, it has been observed that, although mass rape during the civil war has been attributed to the Bosniak victimization as a collective, individual experiences of women who survived sexual torture have been silenced as an attempt to bring back normality to the Bosnian society.

Apart from women having trapped inside the pain and suffering of humiliation and torture of rapes, children born from such a practice constitute another barrier to inter-community reconciliation. Since, according to the patriarchal society previously mentioned, children born from raped wombs carry the rapist – their father's – ethnicity, the legacy of the conflict remains in the genes of the Bosnian society. Precisely the reconciliation process remains still today a challenge. On the one hand, reintegrating survivors of mass (sexual) violence, and on the other, restoring the fragile relationship between raped women, children of rapists and the Bosnian community altogether (Todorova, 2011).

#### 4.7 Consequences of rape as a weapon of war

*"I am no longer a woman"*

*A mass rape victim (Mukwege, 2018).*

Rape leaves huge and maybe irreversible scars, wounds and trauma. It is common that rape survivors feel their lives ruined and with a feeling of incapacity to rebuild their lives. Besides, these consequences are worsened by poverty. Likewise, they see destroyed the comfort and security one takes for granted in their lives. Among other things, because the lack of prosecution of aggressors makes them be free of charges and, thus, they keep living in the same villages, cities, streets, schools and even houses.

An expert in medical consequences of sexual violence, the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner, argues that rape "when it doesn't kill a woman, can leave her unable to bear children" (Mukwege, 2018). Sexually transmitted diseases, which were in the case of Rwanda used as one more weapon of war, have fatal consequences in the future physical health of the victim, as well as depression and psychological trauma. To the latter, it is also added the victim's confusion in her life and loss of identity after the abuses, more frequent if they have been public.

As a consequence, victims no longer find their place in their own communities and feel that they do not belong there anymore. As a rape aftermath, women and girls lose their sense of womanhood (Sharlach, 2000; Mukwege, 2018).

The use of mass rape is particularly devastating because apart of causing all of this pain, if used in ethnic conflict, it causes destruction in the whole community. Mass rape as a war tool is an effective and powerful mechanism of genocide because it manages to destroy at the same time the morale of women, families and communities (Sharlach, 2000). To as to pursue ethnic cleansing, Serbian soldiers used very effectively not only rape, but also forced impregnation against a community that heavily stigmatizes women that have been rape, and families to which raped women belong.

#### 4.7.1 Stigmatization: rape survivors, invisible living casualties

*“A fate worse than death”*

McGlynn (2008: p.77)

It is not only rape-related injuries, sex-aversion, psychological and physical trauma, huge degradation of dignity, violation of HR or vulnerating pregnancy status and women’s freedom; rape survivors face the disgrace of being repudiated in their own families and immediate circle, which becomes completely dishonored after having a woman raped (Sharlach, 2000). For this reason, not only are raped women once humiliated, but twice.

In the case of Bosnia, after the lives of these females was broken apart, they were sometimes expelled from their families and/or communities because of bringing dishonor, shame, bad luck, impurity, dirtiness or disgrace to the community, village and family. As a consequence of the socio-cultural stigma and shame, and the taboo category of rape, difficulties to document rape increase disproportionately in these traditional and patriarchal societies. Raped women during the Bosnian conflict did not dare to document rape; they’d rather hide the assault(s) on their bodies (Abdullahi, 2016). Thus, if reporting these aggressions does not happen, raped women are not perceived as victims. In addition, unreported rape inevitable protects the rapist and obscures women who suffered those abuses.

Concretely within Muslim Bosnians, the group targeted with genocidal acts, existed a problem of stigmatization of raped women in such a hostile cultural and social environment. Like in other places, the honor of the family and its identity rely on female chastity. As a consequence of this social prejudice, women did not report when they had been raped so as to avoid being rejected and being labelled with the Pariah status (Sharlach, 2000).

The symbol of women as an object of honor and possession leads to social rejection and inculcation when women report that they have been raped. The family, especially in hostile and patriarchal societies where there’s strong stigma against raped women, feels greatly dishonored and directly offended.

In the case of Bosnia there has been a tendency to silence individual experiences of women to try to forget the atrocities, forcing women to live alone with their misunderstood suffering (Todorova, 2011).

#### *4.7.2 Reparations of damage*

It is considered crucial that in the aftermath of the rapes, extensive counselling is offered to women who have suffered the attacks and are seeking help (Hansen, 2001). The lack of mechanisms has been denounced often, for instance, Dr. Mukwege says that raped women do not receive substantial reparations. In many cases, victims do not have even access to court and are, of course, excluded from reparation processes (Mukwege, 2018). But, in fact, reparations comprise an effective instrument to support victims, families, communities, and create a sentiment of justice. Reparations in the form of community reinsertion, physical and mental health aid, and legal counselling are aimed at helping victims get back their dignity, and also constitute acts of recognition of damage and compensation of the harm caused by the brutal violations of HR (Mukwege Foundation, n.d.). How can fragile victims then just go back to her villages and families without resources and strength?

Dr. Mukwege suggests that apart from the previously mentioned support other activities are needed, for instance: awareness-raising campaigns focalizing on deleting stigmatization, placing the responsibility and shame on the aggressor, and education about male behavior. They need to be taught the inhumanity of such conduct to self-condemn them (Mukwege, 2018).

#### **4.8 Fight against impunity: ICTY**

To deal with the atrocities committed during the various conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and to fight against the impunity of these barbaric acts, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by the UNSCR 827 in 1993 under the pressure of the international public opinion, as an UN court of law that worked until year 2017.

Regarding violence against women, it was not until the early 1990s that sexual violence against women at wartime was granted enough international legal attention mainly due to the creation of this tribunal and the one for Rwanda (ICTR) (Henry, 2014).

It was the ICTY in 1993 who turned upside down the ignorance towards gender-crime at war by explicitly including wartime rape as torture as a crime against humanity (Hansen, 2001). In fact, the charges with crimes against humanity include: rape, torture, enslavement and outrages against individual dignity. In this regard, the Yugoslavian trials set precedents on the prosecution of war-rape criminals, since twenty-three men have been convicted by international tribunals for using rape as a tool of war in the Yugoslavian conflicts (Sverdlov, 2017).

During its ruling, the ICTY irreversibly altered the scenario of humanitarian law, since the tribunal provided the victims of the horrors of the war with a chance to voice what they had witnessed and suffered as survivors. This provides a successful precedent changing the methodology not relying exclusively on scientific and realist discourses (Lee Koo, 2002). From a judicial point of view, it is of paramount importance not to leave raped women unrecognized as victims and to ensure legal prosecution against attackers (Sverdlov, 2017).

As a matter of fact, development in the discipline and the raising awareness of the implications of mass rape as a strategy of war, provoked a shift from the old conceptualization of wartime rape as a by-product of armed conflict to its recognition as an internationally recognized war crime used as a military tactic and an instrument of genocide (Henry, 2014). This transformation constitutes a total feminist success.

Some experts (see Cohen, 2018) highlight that, although the international community has formally broken the silence and that international trials are important to shape global norms, they should not be considered as the main policy solution to deter future incidents of mass rape at war.

In fact, as Lisa Sharlach stated, “the lack of prosecution of rapists sends a signal to the men of the world” (Sharlach, 2000: p.102).

## **PART V. CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions from research**

The analysis of the case of the use of mass rape in the war of B-H from 1991 to 1995 reveals that there was a linkage between targeting and raping women with a deliberate strategy of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Though rape during wartime is a widely committed crime, and it was, in fact, committed by both sides of the conflict, rape was used as a weapon of war by the Serb forces to forcibly impregnate Muslim women, so as to pursue their rational strategy of expelling them and build the Greater Serbia with no Muslims.

Although authors like Kaufman (2006) sustain that strategies of conflict in ethnic wars comprise mainly symbolic politics and acts, in this article it is maintained that violence against women was rather planned than random and “for free”. This last idea matches with Kalyvas (2001) thesis, which argues that senseless violence could be not as gratuitous as it appears. Therefore, mass rapes in Bosnia are found to be directly linked to ethnic cleansing and a product of a deliberate strategy.

This study shows that raping is an extreme source of insecurity for women’s lives. Crimes are proved to be repeated and silenced. For this reason, it is fundamental in the discipline that security theories are thought from a more inclusive and real point of view, considering forms of insecurity and war that have traditionally been left out of bounds. It appears difficult to successfully confront gendered insecurities like war rape if international politics and security are not reconstructed within newer discourses.

In line with this, the acts and the victims of barbaric war tragedies are part of the public international war memory, making especial emphasis in raped women, for years silent, ignored and despised.

Moreover, the conclusions drawn from the consequences of stigmatization reveal that the fact that the shame and social stigma is placed on the victim and not on the aggressor, preserves victims from reporting the crimes. By maintaining this “deaf” situation, victims

will not be perceived as victims if sexual crimes and rapes are not widely spoken, acknowledged and denounced.

In addition, it reinforces the idea that mass rape in Bosnia was a premeditated tactic, since one of the aims was to destroy the Muslim community, partly because of the consequences of stigmatization.

In order to achieve the complete eradication of violence against women, which sounds still today somehow idealistic, one of the questions that needs to be asked is, how can we assure that such violence is forbidden by robust and strong legislation that is taken seriously to effectively end impunity of attackers?

Regarding recognition of crimes, it is of paramount importance that in the aftermath of the rapes, torturers are brought to court and held accountable for their crimes. If the sexual crimes remain unpunished, rape will continue its ravage. Since mass rapes have been universally used as a weapon of war, the recognition of sexual violence in conflict as a crime against humanity is a great step in the end of impunity, especially in the cases of “genocidal rape”.

It would also be interesting to point out that, though universal justice could be difficult to achieve in some cases, it would be convenient to install a “truth commission” with the aim of acknowledging the real pain caused. This is a symbolic form of seeking justice for the victims, in the sense that, at least, evidence of attacks remains forever and are not forgotten. The truth commission would contribute to install international memory of women victims of sexual atrocities and humiliation.

To sum up, existing literature, as well as the analysis of this research uncovers the premeditation on the attacks with the aim to debilitate the Muslim community by cracking its social stability, impart insecurity and take advantage of stigmatization. Moreover, mass rapes and forced impregnation reveal the delivered usage of women as mere objects, booty of war, symbol of revenge and demonstration of male power.

## **5.2 Contributions of this paper and further analysis**

This study might complement existing research on the subject and encourages further analysis to be made in order to clarify the limitations of traditional views regarding global security, and to contribute to the denounce of the use of mass rape as a tactic of war, specifically declaring a war against women to debilitate the other side.

Besides, it would be interesting that coming research would explore post-conflict reconciliation in societies that have suffered mass wartime rape, paying especial attention to the role of children born from these attacks, about who very little information has been found.

## **5.3 Limitations of the text**

The main limitation of this study could be that the research has been drawn on mainly literature and it would have been interesting to use victims' testimonies to reflect the reality from a very direct point of view..

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