

Human Security

REPORT
2021

Gender and sex, amid violence and post-conflict dynamics.

HUMAN SECURITY No.15 - May 2021

UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the Security Council in 2000, has highlighted the role of women in contemporary conflicts and their crucial contribution to peace processes. More than twenty years have passed since then, but many grey areas and critical issues remain. As argued in the first article of this issue of *Human Security*, by **Evelyn Pauls** – Impact Manager at the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security – much of the (growing) interest of academics, practitioners and policy-makers in women and conflict is often still filtered through a highly gendered lens, encouraging a view of women as passive victims or inherently peaceful. The motivations and experiences of female combatants are often neglected; all too often, this legitimizes the post-conflict return of traditional gen-

dered structures and leaves unheard the needs of women who took up arms and thus challenged the stereotypes of prevailing narratives.

Following on, **Leena Vastapuu** – Planning and Reporting Officer at the EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic, and one of the authors of the *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research* – reflects on why female ex-combatants are still so under-represented in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. In providing an overview of the main explanations offered by feminist scholars, Vastapuu emphasizes how ideological factors often doom female ex-combatants to a limbo of oblivion in which they are ‘not soldier enough’ to access the formal DDR process, yet ‘not civilian enough’ to join women’s organizations and movements that are more aligned with the imagery of ‘peace-loving mothers’.

In line with Pauls’ and Vastapuu’s re-

marks, **Anna Toniolo** – a graduate in International Relations from the University of Turin – looks at policies and practices to counter violent extremism in Kosovo to understand if and to what extent the deradicalization plan implemented by the government takes into account the diverse and multilayered experiences of those women who, voluntarily or not, have joined the Islamic State.

The next article, written by **Gioachino Panziera** – Junior Research Fellow at the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) – sheds light on the patterns of sexual violence perpetrated in the context of detention in Syria. Panziera then analyses the causes and effects of the militarization of sex and reflects on how hierarchical gender relations inform the rules of war and respond to political agendas, thereby becoming instruments of power through the exploitation, abuse and control of subaltern bodies.

And it is precisely the exploitation,

abuse and control of bodies that turn the movements of Ethiopian domestic workers to the Middle East into 'paths of violence', as **Silvia Cirillo** – a PhD candidate in Global Studies at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo – recounts in her contribution to *Human Security*. Next, shifting the focus to Latin America, **Marta Michelini** – Junior Project Manager for COOPI – addresses the issue

of gender discrimination and violence in the context of Colombia, where the COVID-19 pandemic has interlaced with a post-conflict situation already marked by widespread human insecurity.

In the last article of this issue of *Human Security*, **Elisa Armando** – a graduate in Anthropology of Politics, Violence and Crime from the University College

London (UCL) – gives voice to the representatives of twelve non-governmental organizations in North Uganda, who, since the end of the Acholi conflict, have been committed to women's economic empowerment so that economic independence is followed by individual and social emancipation from the dominant patriarchal system.



Source: Marta Michelini

Evelyn Pauls

**Peacebuilding and female combatants:
Rethinking women's involvement in conflict.**

Leena Vastapuu

**Not soldier enough, not civilian enough: The under-
representation of female soldiers in DDR programmes.**

Anna Toniolo

**Countering violent extremism in Kosovo:
Gender-blind or gender-sensitive practices?**

Gioachino Panzieri

**Gender, agency and structures of violence: Feminist
perspectives on the militarization of sex in Syria.**

Silvia Cirillo

**Paths of violence: The case of Ethiopian domestic
workers in the Middle East.**

Marta Michelini

**A look at Colombia: Gender discrimination and violence
in pandemic times.**

Elisa Armando

Among Acholi women, it all starts with a necklace.



Source: Silvia Cirillo

The Burmese night: Pandemic and authoritarian temptations in Myanmar.

HUMAN SECURITY No.16 - October 2021

On 1 February 2021, Myanmar's generals ended the experiment of 'disciplined' democracy (which they initiated) by carrying out a political oxymoron: a military coup d'état occurring almost 'under the rule of law'. Because the 2008 Constitution shields the prerogatives of the military, the abrupt seizure of power by

the Armed Forces of Myanmar took many observers by surprise. In fact, if one looks at the last ten years, the events of 1 February seem somewhat paradoxical. Yet, as argued by **Stefano Ruzza** – author of the first article in this issue of *Human Security* and Professor in Political Science and in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Turin – the coup may appear more intelligible if we assess it in light of the broader project that the generals had been engaged in prior to the (partial)

political liberalization, and, above all, if we consider their actions and words since they returned to government.

The complexity of the political dynamics in Myanmar, however, does not end with the role of the military junta: in the wake of the coup, ethnonational rebel movements have come under the spotlight in Myanmar politics, as explained by **David Brenner** – Lecturer in Global Insecurities at the University of Sussex. In his article,

Brenner reflects on the support offered to the popular resistance against the military by Karen and Kachin armed organizations, and highlights how the strategies of different ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) are deeply shaped by the relationships between their leaders and social foundations. In contrast to the rebellions discussed by Brenner, the Arakan Army in Rakhine State has maintained a certain strategic ambiguity. Similarly, local civil society in Rakhine State seems to have opted for a milder stance vis-à-vis the deteriorating political situation in the rest of the country. To better understand the perspectives and reactions of the Rakhine people, between July and August 2021 the **Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team** (AHCT) conducted a series of interviews, summarized in this issue of *Human Security* by **Lorraine Charbonnier** – Research Fellow at T.wai. As the words of the interviewees indicate, the reasons behind the relative silence of the Rakhine

people are complex and stem from a long history of discrimination and marginalization coupled with the political aspirations of both the Rakhine people and the Arakan Army.

There is also a more numinous and occult dimension to Myanmar's political turmoil, which professional freelance journalist **Massimo Morello** outlines in his article, where he brings in Alejandro Jodorowsky's idea of 'psychomagic' to describe how Buddhist fundamentalism, amplified by esoteric arts and practices, intertwines with Myanmar's ethnocracy and the junta's violent repression.

Far more material interests shift the focus of this issue of *Human Security* to the arms trade and the proliferation of light weapons in Myanmar, most notably to the finding of a twelve-gauge shell marked 'Cheddite' – a French-Italian manufacturer based in Livorno – that the military fired against protesters in Yangon.

How did that shell end up in a country that has been subject to various forms of arms embargoes by the European Union since July 1991? To address this question, **Alessandro De Pascale** and **Emanuele Giordana** – both journalists and regular contributors to the Italian newspaper *il manifesto* – trace the journey taken by the Cheddite bullet shell from Livorno: first, into the hands of the Myanmar military and then onto the agenda of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliament. This account is followed by an article by **Francesco Buscemi** – researcher at the Emerging Research in International Security (ERIS) Research Group of the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, and Research Fellow at T.wai – who delves into the dynamics of arms proliferation and the acquisition of weapons by political rebel movements in Myanmar's borderlands.

This issue of *Human Security* on Myanmar ends with a closer look at the health situation in remote areas of



Source: Hkun Lat/Getty Images

the country. The first article addressing the topic draws from AHCT's detailed weekly reports and focuses on the socio-economic impacts of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Rakhine State and the related chal-

lenges faced by humanitarian organizations operating in a context of 'crises within the crisis'. Among these is the Turin-based **MedAcross**, which has been providing medical and humanitarian assistance in Myanmar since

2016 and is now striving to meet the health needs of the poorest people in Kawthaung District, in the far south of the country – as described by MedAcross's representatives **Vittoria Brucoli** and **Erika Vitale**.

Stefano Ruzza

The dream regime: In the minds of Myanmar's generals.

David Brenner

Rebel politics after the coup: Myanmar's ethnic armed organizations and their social foundations.

Peace and Development Initiative – Kintha, Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team, and Lorraine Charbonnier

Governance and politics in Rakhine State.

Massimo Morello

Burmese psychomagic.

Alessandro De Pascale and Emanuele Giordana

Italian ammunitions in Myanmar.

Francesco Buscemi

The proliferation of light weapons in the resistance against the Tatmadaw.

Peace and Development Initiative – Kintha, Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team, and Lorraine Charbonnier

Crises within the crisis: The impacts of lockdowns and the challenges of humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State.

Vittoria Brucoli and Erika Vitale

Cut off: The dire situation of Myanmar's health sector after the coup

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Human Security is supported by:



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