ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MASCULINITIES, CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING

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MASCULINITIES IN CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

A critical mapping of the field

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MASCULINITIES IN CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

A critical mapping of the field[1]

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Introduction

In her work on men, militarism, and peacebuilding, Mary Moran describes an encounter with a senior United Nations Political Affairs officer in Liberia. Having explained that she was researching male non-combatants in Liberia, the senior UN official expressed amazement that Moran "could find any 'men who did not fight'" (2010: 268). With this backdrop set, Moran recalls the words of a Liberian civilian man whom she had previously interviewed, who said: "we are truly the forgotten men" (2010: 268).

Well over a decade later, scholarship on civilian and non-combatant men remains sparse. While research on masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding is growing rapidly, it typically centres on masculine, militarised, and combatant violence, overlooking the multiplicity of men's lived experiences in times of conflict (Schulz et al., 2024; see Campbell & Ní Aoláin, this volume). This handbook complements and expands this dominant focus by exploring other, hidden, or marginalised manifestations of masculinities in conflict and emergency settings. The task at hand, then, is to "look into the cracks" (Hamber, 2016) between diverse manifestations of masculinities rather than to narrow the discussion to violent, militarised, and violated masculinities only.

Against this backdrop, here, we review and situate the contributions of this handbook within existing literature and debates on gender, peace, and security. Men – in particular already powerful men and men who have gained 'gendered conflict capital' (Balbon, 2023) – are central players in conflict-affected societies and peacebuilding processes, often to the point of crowding out women and persons of diverse SOGIESC. Yet when 'gender' is raised in contexts of peace and security, it is (still) often used as a "synonym for women" (Carver, 1995). This conflation means that while men are typically hyper-visible in conflict and peacebuilding spaces, *masculinities* are, paradoxically, rendered invisible (Puechguirbal, 2010: 175). Omitting to examine men's gendered selves, social norms around masculinities, and patriarchal societal structures has numerous implications. First, it obscures the impacts of armed conflict on men and boys and how these, in turn, affect the women and girls in their lives. Second, it conceals how norms around masculinity and gender more broadly shape how peace is built in the aftermath of conflict (Johnston, 2023). Such 'peace' is often a patriarchal and hierarchical one, in which women's concerns and needs as well as those

of diverse SOGIESC are seen as secondary at best, while less powerful, non-combatant men are also sidelined. This collection redresses this gap.

Focusing on civilian men, we are mindful of not reinforcing false dichotomies of 'bad, violent militarised men' versus 'good, progressive, and peaceful civilian men,' and to not forget that even more marginalised men have, in many societies, certain privileges, entitlements, and power inaccessible to most women and persons of diverse SOGIESC (Henry, 2017). The handbook does not set out to idealise, romanticise, or purify civilian men as inherently good, progressive, and peaceful. As Schulz et al. note,

> rather than being always neatly separated spheres, empirical realities in times of violence, conflict and its wake often paint a more ambiguous and complex picture, showing how so-called civilian men may often take on, perform of embody traits of militarised masculinities as well, or how the status or how the status of civilian vis-à-vis soldier/warrior is often much more fluid.
>
> (2024: 22)

Civilian men are often responsible for perpetrating and perpetuating violence, including sexual and gender-based violence against women, other men, and persons with diverse SOGIESC along a continuum of violence. Similarly, many civilian men maintain and cement militarism and the militarisation of masculinities, including "as politicians and those who control the economic levers of warfare (e.g. investors in the arms industry), or at a different level, the civilian fathers (and mothers, of course) who encourage their sons to join the military or their daughters to enact traditional femininities" (Schulz et al., 2024: 22). As such, the chapters in this volume direct the focus on hidden, marginalised, and civilian masculinities while paying careful and critical attention to these complex and intersecting dynamics.

Peace, like conflict, is all too often a masculinised process, in which the 'men who understand war' are given preferential access to negotiating peace and setting the parameters for the 'post-conflict order.' In societies largely at peace, men with military backgrounds are assumed to be more knowledgeable about issues of security than others, while non-combatant men in positions of societal power can leverage their status to manage conflicts (Ashe, 2009; Krause, 2019, Wright, 2020; Kunz et al., 2018; Rigual et al., 2022; Yousaf, 2021). Women and openly gender-diverse persons, on the other hand, even if they lived through a conflict or were combatants, are often required to justify why their experiences and insights matter or why they should participate in negotiations, though some women are able to also leverage relative positions of power (Rigual et al., 2022). Yet not all men are afforded access to the gilded corridors of power or smoky back rooms in which the so-called post-conflict order is mapped out, nor do all men benefit equally from this order. As within other societal processes, some men – because of class-, age-, ethnic or other traits – are better able to access the resultant spoils better than others.

It is well established that situations of armed conflict interact with, strain, reinforce, and reconfigure gender norms and relations in conflict-affected societies (El-Bushra, 2012). Rigid but often increasingly unattainable norms and expectations of what it means to be 'a real man' shape the lives of civilian and ex-combatant men alike. Such rigid norms can exacerbate the impacts of trauma, disability, and displacement, though still keeping men's patriarchal privileges intact (Chiovenda, 2015; El-Bushra & Gardner, 2016; Hollander, 2014; Kabachnik et al., 2012; Naujoks & Thandar Ko, 2018, see also Riley & Vale, this volume). Yet the 'post-conflict' moment can also be a time for change, especially through efforts of civil-society organisations, creating spaces for women's participation and empowerment, as well as to promote less domineering, less violent,

and more equal masculinities (Schroer-Hippel, 2017; Porter, 2013; Peacock & Barker, 2014; Vess et al., 2013) and greater acceptance of men of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions (Daigle & Myrttinen, 2018). These processes of change are rarely linear or uncontested (Gibbs et al., 2015; Gibbs et al., 2020; El-Bushra, 2012; Pierotti et al., 2018), and emerging masculinities may seek to re-establish new forms of patriarchy (Myrttinen, 2019), or older patriarchal structures and practices are updated and reinforced (Johnston, 2023; Mackenzie & Foster, 2017). On the whole, research on the gendered mechanics and dynamics of peacebuilding processes has rarely examined how these are shaped by patriarchy, rather treating patriarchy and associated values as a "black box" (Balbon, 2023: 5). It is our hope that this volume goes some way to lifting the lid off this black box.

Centering civilian masculinities, de-centering militarised masculinities

Our aim is to bring civilian masculinities to the fore within a field that has predominantly centered (on) militarised men and masculinities. The dominance of militarised masculinities in conflict settings impact and shape the lives of civilian men to such an extent that the line between 'militarised' and 'civilian' masculinities can be blurred. This is especially evident in the case of non-state actors such as private security/military companies (Chisholm, 2023; Higate, 2012; Mynster Christensen, 2016), local self-defence or political militias (Krause, 2019; Tapscott, 2018), or groups designated as being violent extremists (Duriesmith & Ismail, 2019). A further group of men who operate across civilian and 'military' lines are local interpreters working alongside Global North military forces (de Jong and Shajjan, this volume).

During and in the wake of armed conflict, military and militarised masculinities are often dominant through "gendered conflict capital" and the "sticky gender norms" they establish (Balbon, 2023; Ahmed, 2014; Cheng, 2018). In times of armed conflict, there is often immense pressure on men to take up arms, and both state and non-state armed groups actively mobilise notions of warrior and protector masculinities (Myrttinen et al., 2017). In some contexts, these military or militarised masculinities may become hegemonic (Connell, 1995) at the national (e.g. Baker, 2019; Niner, 2020), sub-national (Abdulah, 2018), or community-level (Duriesmith & Ismail, 2019). In these cases, certain military or militarised masculinities become 'the most celebrated way of being a man' and legitimise the current patriarchal structure.

However, as some of the chapters in this collection demonstrate, not all military or militarised masculinities are equally celebrated. In certain contexts, these martial ways of being a man and associations with combatant identities may instead be reviled, ostracised, or looked down upon, or their privileges may dissipate with time (Balbon, 2023; Friðriksdóttir, 2018b; Haugbolle, 2012; McMullen et al. 2024; Menzel 2011).

Decolonising masculinities

Much of the work on military masculinities has focused on Global North militaries, often in the context of peacekeeping and so-called stabilisation missions (e.g. Dyvik, 2016; Mäki-Rahkola & Myrttinen, 2013; Welland, 2015; Whitworth, 2004). This is reflective of a broader trend in scholarship on men and masculinities, where many of the concepts and terminologies originate from and in the Global North, and analyses are often originally based on the experiences of (middle-class, white, college-educated) men in the Anglo-Saxon world. Undoing these tendencies requires a greater emphasis on decolonial approaches to masculinities, conflict, and peacebuilding – these are in urgent need of further exploration and development.

There are some important exceptions to this Global North focus and domination, such as research on masculinities in the state security forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2018), Liberia (Quest, 2020), Pakistan (Rashid, 2021), Russia (Eichler, 2012), and Rwanda (Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019). The work on militarised masculinities in the Global South has often had a greater focus on men in non-state armed or resistance groups and their post-war experiences in Africa (e.g. Duriesmith, 2017; Parpart, 2015; Vigh, 2006; Xaba, 2001), Asia and the Middle East (e.g. Agarwal, 2022; Alburo, 2011; Bannerjee, 2006; de Silva, 2014; Niner, 2020; Parashar, 2018; Riley, 2019), and Latin America (e.g. Dietrich Ortega, 2012; Theidon, 2009; Thylin, 2018). Similarly, the research on gang masculinities typically centres on countries with protracted, multi-faceted conflicts and/or criminal and organised violence or those which are 'officially' post-conflict following a peace accord but whose daily lives are not defined by peace (e.g. Baird, 2012; Dinnen & Thompson, 2009; Harland & McCready, 2015; Salo, 2006; Ward, 2000; see also Baird and Kelly in this volume). This work does not always apply explicitly to critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) or feminist approaches.

The accent on armed actors and violent masculinities in the Global South epitomises limited and limiting Western understandings of masculinities and conflict in the Global South, where racialised men are all too easily associated with assumptions of brutality and danger (Lewis, 2022). Many concepts and ideas from masculinities studies cannot straightforwardly be applied and transferred to diverse contexts across the Global South (Beasley, 2008; Connell, 1998; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Kopano Ratele (2013), for example, argues that hegemonic masculinity is not applicable to the African context, and African masculinities can be thought of as hegemonic and subordinate at the same time. This is reflective of dominant approaches to peacebuilding and violence prevention, which too often centre Western and Global North concepts (Boonzaier et al., 2020; Te Maihāroa et al., 2022).

A decolonial approach to masculinities and peacebuilding entails a vitally important consideration of the interconnections between the historical patterns and the impact of colonialism on the gender order and masculinities more specifically (Ratele, 2021). The contemporary system of peacebuilding and its policy propositions are often still structured by colonial processes, which became embedded in its operations and objectives.

These colonial processes specifically encoded violent reconstructions of gender, sex, reproduction, sexuality, and kin relations.[2] Masculinities were created, and others were devastated by the colonial authorities – resulting in the emergence of what we can term 'colonised masculinities'. Colonised masculinities are articulated as relations of power constructed through violent colonial oppressions and performances of gendered domination over racialised subjects, seeking to redefine the social order. Sinha (1995: 447) defines this reconstruction process as the "feminisation of the colonised male in relation to the colonising male." The example leveraged situates the "manly Englishman" constituted both in relation and opposition to the "effeminate Bengali" – that is, the articulation of constructed framings of masculinity creating hierarchies of adherence under which colonised subjects are held as lesser men, akin to women. These constructions of a 'feminised' colonised subject are not incompatible with the simultaneous framing of these men as uncontrolled, hypersexual, and violent, according to Fanon (1967). Of course, these new gender orders did not imply a simple imposition of European patterns of patriarchy, nor were pre-colonial societies free from patriarchy.

To fully understand and aim at undoing the impact of these processes on masculinities and the gender order, de- and anti-colonial approaches to peacebuilding are needed rather than merely a shift towards the 'local' (Johnston, 2023). Decolonial peacebuilding scholars have introduced a new framework, building upon the theoretical waves of postcolonialism and anchored in localised

indigenous epistemologies – most notably grounded in understandings of arbitration and restorative justice as pathways to conflict resolution and peace (Lundy et al., 2022). These help to deconstruct colonial hierarchies and promote new knowledges and practices in peacebuilding. To this end, we situate the decolonial process as requiring both a cognitive and structural shift towards one in which indigenous solutions, agency, and voices are seen as the key sites of conflict transformation. This approach to peacebuilding is one that creates dynamics and actions that allow those communities harmed by colonial violence, institutions, and ideologies to act as agents of change while demanding that those who benefited from oppression take active measures to address the harms imposed by colonial legacies in the past and present. These de- and anti-colonial approaches also need to remain conscious that local constructions of masculinity were often also patriarchal in nature (Bah & Barasa, 2023; Johnston, 2023; Kunz et al., 2018). As Boege (2011: 447) reminds us, "specific social contexts and the gendered particularities of processes of participation and inclusion (or exclusion) need careful examination in each single case."

The challenges of living up to gender norms

The growing literature on men and masculinities in conflict, humanitarian, and displacement settings sheds light on the challenges men face to live up to hegemonic expectations of masculinity, leading to 'thwarted,' 'collapsing,' or 'traumatic' masculinities and various coping mechanisms to reassert their sense of manhood (e.g. Achilli, 2015; Barbelet & Wake, 2017; de Alwis, 2021; Jaji, 2009; Kabachnik et al., 2012; Slegh et al., 2014; Szczepanikova, 2005; Turner, 1999; Vitale & Ryde, 2016). The themes raised here are echoed in the research on masculinities affected by long-term occupation and protracted conflict and its aftermath (e.g. Ashe & Harland, 2014; Chiovenda, 2015; Dery et al., 2022; El-Bushra & Gardner, 2016; Enria, 2016; Gokani et al., 2015; Hollander, 2014; see also Bagaporo, this volume).

Men's struggles highlighted in these studies often relate to the difficulties of living up to expectations of being the economic provider for their households as well as the impacts of experiencing curtailed agency and diminished social status. Men may also expect to continue pre-crisis personal and societal privileges during and after a crisis and struggle with any restrictions placed on these. These may include men's expectations to be dominant, of having mobility and agency, and being in control (including over female family members); of being entitled to privileging their own leisure time and socialising with other men over care or household work, as men's work is seen as being of more value; and of being the final decision-maker. The literature underscores many men's difficulties with accepting their changed life circumstances, their sense of loss and failure, as well as negative coping mechanisms, including mental health issues such as depression, suicidality, substance abuse, and violent behaviour (Ezard, 2014; Kabachnik et al., 2012; Kizza et al., 2012; Lehrer, 2009; Slegh et al., 2014; see also Masta & Garasu, this volume). The inability to live up to such ideals of manhood is often identified as a major stressor. Un- or underemployment and lack of social standing – what Jaji (2009: 184) calls a feeling of "economic 'impotence'" – are common in humanitarian and displacement settings and can undermine men's sense of identity and sense of self-worth (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Dolan, 2003; Dominelli, 2020). Despite the widespread and consistent – but scattered – qualitative evidence of displacement-affected men's poor mental health, Affleck et al. (2018) note an under-representation of men in gendered studies of displaced persons' mental health. The literature on men in protracted conflict emphasises the connections between mental health effects and masculinities norms. In particular, this work underscores that expectations of men to be 'unemotional' compound negative impacts of crises, as men often do not seek help

or constructively engage with their emotions, but rather resort to negative, masculine-coded coping mechanisms, including substance abuse (Slegh et al., 2014).

Studies on the impacts of displacement on masculinities post-resettlement, as well as upon men's return from displacement, similarly draw attention to men's challenges to make a living and be a provider in collapsed economies, with some men taking on more gender-equitable ways of being a man (Grabska & Fanjoy, 2015; Levine et al., 2019; Matsuoka & Sorensen, 1999).

The so-called 2015 'refugee crisis' in Europe in particular has led to numerous studies on European host populations' negative views as well as racialised (and often Islamophobic) media stereotyping of the men as security threats, as being hyper-sexualised, as indolent, criminal, and culturally 'backward' (Allsopp, 2017; Jaji, 2021; Olivius, 2016; Wojnicka & Pustułka, 2019). As Dolan (2003), Szczepanikova (2005), and Turner (2020) note, refugee men may be simultaneously 'securitised' as threats yet also 'infantilised' by humanitarian actors, especially in camp settings, while their needs and vulnerabilities remain overlooked.

Highlighting men's vulnerabilities

Different sets of literature have explored the interlinkages between and incompatibilities of vulnerabilities and masculinities (Kreft & Agerberg, 2024). The 'refugee crisis,' for example, led to an increased examination of men's and boys' vulnerabilities, including labour exploitation, survival sex, and violence encountered along migratory routes – but also more positively homosocial solidarity and positive coping mechanisms, such as mutual caring and informal support systems (Bozok & Bozok, 2019; Howe et al., 2018; Ingvars, 2019; Krystalli et al., 2018; Turner, 2020; see also, Linthout et al. and Paul, this volume). At its core, this work is underpinned by the socially constructed discrepancies between ideals of masculinities, portraying and expecting strength on the one hand and experiences of vulnerability on the other (Connell, 1998; Carpenter, 2006).

An area of recent, rapid growth in research and policy interest relative to men's vulnerabilities in conflict pertains to conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys (SVAMB). Although SVAMB has been documented to a greater extent in civilian settings – including schools, sports clubs, religious institutions, families, prisons, and so on – its presence in conflict zones and in militaries was long ignored or sidelined (e.g. Carpenter, 2006; Dolan, 2010; Drumond, 2012; Leiby, 2009; Lewis, 2014; Sivakumaran, 2007). This has changed dramatically in recent years, due in part to the engaged efforts of academics and civil society activists (Belkin, 2012; Féron, 2018; Schulz, 2020; Touquet et al., 2021; Zalewski et al., 2018).

This growing body of research has documented the occurrence of sexual violence against men and boys in more than 25 armed conflict settings, establishing that it occurs much more frequently than is commonly assumed (Dolan, 2018; Schulz, 2020, see also Touquet & Schulz, this volume). A dominant focus across these texts is an examination of the intersecting physical, psycho-social, and physiological injuries and the gendered harms of this type of violence on male survivors. Frequently, these effects and their impact on survivors' masculinities are framed as forms of 'emasculation' by way of 'feminisation' and 'homosexualisation' (Auchter, 2017; Sivakumaran, 2007; for a critical reading of these terminologies, see Eichert, 2019; Schulz, 2018). This dominant focus on survivors' vulnerabilities and violations is both part of and facilitates the violation-centric view in much of the literature on and engagement with masculinities in conflict and peacebuilding contexts more broadly. More recently, emerging work has begun to move away from this singular focus on vulnerabilities, suffering, and harm to also explore other elements of male sexual violence survivors' experiences, including their activism (Schulz & Ngomokwe, 2021), justice-seeking (Schulz, 2019), or agency (Bitenga Alexandre, 2024; Touquet & Schulz, 2020). More research is yet to

be done, though, on understanding the dynamics and causes of SVAMB from the perspectives of perpetrators – which is crucial for understanding why this type of violence occurs yet which thus far remains entirely absent from existing scholarship.

Another aspect of masculine vulnerability is that of disability: Shuttleworth et al. (2012: 174) note the "dilemma of disabled masculinity," which arises from disability being "associated with being dependent and helpless, whereas masculinity is associated with being powerful and autonomous" (see also Sünbüloğlu, this volume). Overall, there has been a striking lack of engagement in the literature with masculinities and disabilities in conflict-affected settings (Fiske & Giotis, 2021; Sherry, 2016). A notable exception in this respect is a nuanced study by Muhanna-Matar (2020) with Syrian refugee men with disabilities and chronic diseases, as well as work by Lawn et al. (2022) on impacts of disabilities on masculinities of Kachin internally displaced men in Myanmar. There are thus clear parallels with the above-mentioned findings on 'traumatic' and 'thwarted' masculinities, and Lawn et al. (2022) highlight how internally displaced men with disabilities often feel doubly stigmatised. However, as they also highlight, some men reject the 'disability' label, pointing to how they, compared to worse-off men, are still able to fulfill some physical activities. Similarly, Muhanna-Matar (2020) highlights how her respondents constructed their own masculinities as being more successful than those of others.

From change to reasserting patriarchal power

Some men in conflict-affected settings change their outlooks on notions of masculinity and gender equality more broadly and embrace different roles and ways of being a man in the face of crisis. This may include, for instance, showing more emotions, participating in domestic chores, and increased acceptance of women's social and economic participation. Yet others actively engage in work on peacebuilding, as demonstrated in Friðriksdóttir's (2018a) study on ex-combatants as peace activists in Burundi and Schroer-Hippel's (2017) study on the intersections of peace activism and work on transforming masculinities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. Others have pointed out, however, that men who diverge from dominant gender expectations also face opposition and ridicule from peers and family members and/or having to 'hide' their more gender-equitable behaviour (Gressman, 2016; Hollander, 2014; Ingvars, 2019; Lokot, 2018; Szczepanikova, 2005).

A further line of research in the literature examines how displaced men may compare their own masculinity to that of other men, often positively contrasting their own ways of coping with those deemed to have 'failed' as men (e.g. Correa-Velez et al., 2013; Grabska & Fanjoy, 2015; Jaji, 2009; Jensen, 2008; Kleist, 2010; Suerbaum, 2018, 2021). This distinction vis-à-vis the 'abject other' of the 'failed' refugee man is often construed as being linked to one's ethnicity or nationality, class background, or industriousness. Some middle-class or educated refugee men, however, may refuse to take up work seen as being below their status, while other men may feel that taking on feminised work would bring shame upon themselves and their communities (Franz, 2003; Holloway et al., 2019; Jaji, 2009; Jensen, 2008).

An undercurrent in much of the literature has been that of men's attempts to re-assert an imagined pre-conflict patriarchal 'golden age' or feelings of 'masculinity nostalgia' (e.g. El-Bushra et al., 2014; Mackenzie & Foster, 2017). While some men will change their gendered expectations and performances or see crisis as an opportunity to come out into the open with previously-held more equitable norms, others will seek to re-assert masculine dominance. In part, this re-assertion occurs through violence, including in the domestic sphere. Studies on the 'violences of men' – borrowing from Hearn (1998) – and how to change them, mainly centre on different forms of gender-based violence (GBV) and their links to notions of masculinity (e.g. Barker, 2005; Dworkin et al., 2015;

Gibbs et al., 2020; Ratele, 2015). Particular note should be made here of the series of International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) studies on men's attitudes to violence in conflict-affected settings, conducted by the NGO Equimundo (previously Promundo) with a range of partners. Some of the research also goes beyond a narrower focus on masculinities and GBV and examines attempts to re-imagine masculinities and their relationship to violence more broadly in peacebuilding processes and in conflict-affected societies (Baird, 2012; Esuruku, 2011; Myrttinen et al., 2014; Schroer-Hippel, 2017; Wright, 2014). Post-genocide Rwanda stands out as a particular case in this respect, with the government and civil-society organisations actively seeking to re-imagine and create 'the new Rwandan man' (Løvgren & Turner, 2019).

Situations of displacement can also lead to further entrenching the position of already-powerful men, for example through camp management committees, or create possibilities for previously less-advantaged men to increase their social capital. This includes men participating in gender-equality programming by humanitarian actors, which can, however, end up benefiting men who are subsequently able to assert themselves as a new generation of leaders rather than empowering women (Turner, 1999; Dietrich et al., 2020; Grabska, 2011).

Conclusion

As this overview shows, there is a growing and diversifying literature on masculinities in settings of conflict and displacement, paying attention to different manifestations of masculinities and various facets of men's gendered lived realities. Dominant themes within these intersecting debates and discussion include violence, militarism, and militarisation, reflected in a relatively large body of work on militarised and militaristic masculinities and their linkages with conflict, violence and war. Other studies have focused on the effects of war, violence and conflict on masculinities constructions – such as, for instance, in the context of forced migration and displacement or through sexual and gender-based violence against men and boys.

Overall, much of this work on masculinities in the context of conflict and peacebuilding focuses on the war, violence, and conflict aspect and less so on the peace and peacebuilding component despite important and noteworthy exceptions (Esuruku, 2011; Hamber, 2016; Duncanson, 2013). At the same time, and as identified in the chapter, many of the approaches and perspectives throughout this work originate from the Global North and are based on Western ideals or understandings – mirroring colonial dimensions of research on these issues more broadly. As such, further decolonial and anti-colonial thought and activism are required to more fully understand the gendered dynamics of conflict and peace. Likewise, many of these debates in the literature that engage with masculinities in the context of peace, conflict, and security are based on hetero-normative frameworks and assumptions, similarly requiring growing efforts of queering conflict research more broadly (Hagen et al., 2024) and of queering an engagement with masculinities in these settings specifically (Serrano-Amaya, 2024).

Throughout most of these debates, the structural, systemic, and relational dimensions of masculinities and how they play a part in and shape broader societal processes and dynamics – from capitalism, to hetero-normativity, or conservatism – require more critical attention. For this, a relational analysis of masculinities, conflict, and peacebuilding is vital to recognise that all masculinities influence one another (Morrell, 2001) and operate in complex inter-related ways (Schulz et al., 2024). Lastly, then, and as we have shown throughout this chapter and throughout the volume at large, much of the existing engagement with masculinities occurs through a violation-centric lens, focused either on the violences perpetrated by men or violations against men. What remains only insufficiently developed in these debates, however, is an engagement with civilian masculinities – the particular gap that this handbook primarily addresses.

Notes

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2 The construction and maintenance of colonial empires was anchored upon a structural division: between the colonisers and the colonised. Societies were re-stratified and re-organized. The bodies of local populations were subjected to violence and coerced into forced labour, and their land was seized. In parallel, colonialism invested in the configuration, creation, and design of mechanisms to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of the colonisers, forming new power structures and institutions to elevate the new colonial state. Some of these resources would later be claimed by colonised elites in the post-colonial era, further exacerbating systemic class divisions. Ultimately, colonial processes disrupted indigenous relations at almost every level.

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