

Gendered participation, well-being, and representations in political violence: An introduction

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Since the October 2000 adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, scholarly study and policy attention on the inclusion of women and gender into peace and conflict processes has grown tremendously. Although UNSCR 1325 advocates presumed that incorporating women and gender issues into peace processes would improve the prospects of peace and security around the globe, critics point to its core tenets' reliance on an essentialist view of women (e.g. Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). All the articles in this collection question the assumption that “women” constitute a monolithic group. The authors see, examine, and query variation in the impacts of war and conflict on women's statuses and lives as well as in the effect women have on war, conflict, and post-conflict environments.

Research on women and politics similarly focuses on disaggregating women's experiences and interactions with politics, because women are rarely a cohesive group with a single unifying set of political priorities or preferences (e.g. Childs and Krook, 2009; Htun, 2004). This collection's authors critique and challenge both the portrayals and the empirical reality of women's involvements in conflict and peace, focusing on the differentiated ways that institutions, agency, and conflict dynamics condition how women are affected by and affect conflict and the post-conflict setting. In particular, the articles examine the diverse ways in which women participate and are portrayed participating in conflict and war (e.g. as victims, perpetrators, and as variously positioned in hierarchies), how conflict and the threat of conflict affects women's security and welfare, and how the integration of gender into security and legal frameworks influences the post-conflict environment.

The first article investigates the social contexts of how women participate in conflict. In “The social origins of female combatants,” Jakana Thomas and Reed Wood focus on the social gender norms and economic conditions that create opportunities for women to be recruited by and join rebel organizations, not only in supportive roles but also as combatants.² The authors conclude that societal gender expectations and equality condition the

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