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**A Gender Perspective on the Responsibility to Protect: Case study of Machsom Watch
in Israel**

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Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Signed
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Abstract

Exploring the question of '*where are the women*', this study undertakes a narrative thematic analysis of data collected from interviews and field visits with a grass-root women's organization called Machsom Watch in Israel. This study questions the missing link between Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Responsibility to Protect, which both have defining themes of participation and prevention. Grounded in Feminist Security Studies and the activities and roles of the women of Machsom Watch are investigated.

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

DCL- District Coordination and Liaison Office

GR2P- Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect

GSS- General Security Service

ICRtoP- International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect

ICA- Israeli Civil Administration

IDP- Internally Displaced People

IDF- Israeli Defense Force

MINURCAT- United Nations Support Mission to Chad and the Central African Republic

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

OCHA OPT- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Occupied Palestinian Territory

ODIHR- Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PA- Palestinian Authority

R2P- Responsibility to Protect

WILPF- Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

WMD- Weapons of Mass Destruction

WPS- Women Peace and Security

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

Chapter 1: Introduction

About

The Responsibility to Protect emerged as a norm in reaction to the shameful apathy of the international community to harrowing tragedies of Rwanda and Srebrenica in the 1990s. Amidst debates about state sovereignty, humanitarian intervention and efficiency of coercive interventions, the expression ‘responsibility to protect’ first appeared in a report written by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) set up by the Canadian Government in 2000. The report aimed to provide common ground between absolute state sovereignty and the right of international humanitarian intervention in the face of dire humanitarian atrocities.

The key notion of ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P), as reflected in its title, is that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect its citizens from mass atrocities but if it is unable or unwilling to do so, the responsibility lies on the international community. In this way, while affirming state sovereignty as indispensable under the UN Charter, the Responsibility to Protect redefined sovereignty as not just authority but also *responsibility*.

R2P encompasses three specific responsibilities

1. The responsibility to prevent- by addressing the core causes of crisis
2. The responsibility to react- by responding to needs of suffering human beings through coercive or if need be military intervention
3. The responsibility to rebuild- by assisting with reconstruction after military intervention (ICISS, 2001)

Prioritizing preventative and non-military coercive measure, R2P provides a framework to guide intervention, focusing on coherent rules, legitimacy and proportionality. It justifies the much-debated question of intervention on the grounds of not only human protection, but also legal sources founded on Chapter VII of the UN Charter and several other human protection covenants.

Following the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, General Secretary Ban-Ki-Moon’s report ‘*Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*’ (2009) outlined three pillars of responsibility to protect:

1. Pillar one - The State has the responsibility to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, defined under international law by the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court
2. Pillar two- The responsibility of the international community to help States in exercising its responsibility
3. Pillar three- The international community should take appropriate collective action in a timely and decisive manner in the case of continuous failure of the state to protect its citizens.

In Practice

Subsequently in the footsteps of the newfound response to escalating violence on civilians by respective regimes, UN Security Council adopted resolutions explicitly referencing the responsibility to protect in Libya (2011), Cote d’Ivoire (2011), South Sudan (2011), Yemen (2011), Syria (2012) and Central African Republic (2013) (Butler, 2016).

These interventions surfaced layered debates on the principle of state sovereignty, legality of military intervention and the implications of the intervention. The failures and successes of military intervention and what followed right after has been widely debated in academic circles. Intervention in Libya marked a milestone in R2P evolution from a ‘battle around

ideas to battle around implementation’ (Brockmeier et al, 2016). Opinions remain divided among actors who support the notion of human security over state security and those who see its potential for abuse (ibid). Amongst such debates, Applegarth and Block (2010) highlight the paradox of R2P leading to a decline in the appeal of humanitarian intervention, while being designed to actually support it (Butler, 2016). Practical aspects of R2P continue to be criticized since it lacks clear cut operational guidelines.

The vast scholarship that emerged from debates of intervention shadowed the precedence of prevention over intervention. The Responsibility to Protect states “prevention is the most important dimension of the responsibility to protect” (ICISS, 2001). The Report lays out the responsibility of the sovereign state, its communities and institutions and the international community in preventing deadly conflict through development initiatives, rule of law, dialogue or if need be, through tougher measures. The international community in accordance with UN resolutions, has a responsibility to support local initiatives that address structural triggers of conflict, while hoping to avoid intervention all together. R2P prioritizes protection activities short of military measures, through mainly, early warning mechanisms, preventative toolbox and political will (ibid).

Where does Gender come in?

Another point of contestation, and the focus of this study, is the visible absence of gender within Responsibility to Protect. A notable number of scholars have pointed to this lacuna within R2P central documents and discussions (Bond and Sherret, 2006; Davies et al, 2015; Stamnes, 2012; Murphy & Burke, 2015). Despite two decades of UN’s efforts, to promote women’s rights through the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) and since the passing of landmark USCR 1325, gender analysis, gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming remains largely missing from R2P discourse. Both WPS Agenda and R2P were formulated at a time when discourse around security began shifting from a state-centric approach towards a human-centric approach. The WPS Agenda sought to empower women in matters of peace and security. It refers to women in conflict, in need of protection, while also allowing them to participate in prevention and rebuilding activities. It catapulted women into the peace and security arena. R2P is based on the idea of protection to ensure international peace and security. The omission of women altogether and its minimal reference to women as victims deprives them of their agency in the larger context of R2P. The need to address this gender blindness is imperative so as to reflect the commitments of the United Nations to gender issues and also for a successful implementation of R2P (Bond and Sherret, 2006).

With these contestations, the leading research question of this thesis is ‘*where are the women in R2P*’. Inspired by Cynthia Enloe’s book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2014, 2nd edition) this study is rooted in feminist security studies investigations that explore the omission of women. This curiosity challenges mainstream descriptions of international politics that treat men’s roles and experiences as normative and universally valid. Within R2P, the perspective of ‘where are the women’ requires exploring roles and experiences in the context of mass atrocities, apart from the ‘victim’ stereotype (Stamnes, 2012). This study draws on this line of thinking; to explore the agency of women in regarding this aspect of women and R2P. Though considerable attention is given to WPS Agenda and prevention of sexual violence in R2P, the agency of women in their ability to create change is not documented enough. Further more, using a gender lens to analyse the findings, this study attempts to add a gender perspective into the workings of the activities and roles of the case study. On the whole, the study aims to provide a gender perspective into R2P by investigating the activities and roles of Machsom Watch, a women’s grassroots organization in Israel.

The Case Study

The question of applicability of R2P in Israel-Palestine is contentious due to the issue of Palestinian territory, its governing authority and R2P principles of commitment. The Israel-conflict is old, complex and '*protracted, irreconcilable, violent of zero-sum nature, total and central; parties involved in such conflicts have an interest in their continuation*' (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). The issue of territory, authority and gravity of atrocity crimes committed or not committed is widely debated. Despite disagreements on applicability of R2P and considering the cost of human life in the conflict, the question of R2P in Israel-Palestine is not of whether it is applicable or relevant. The question then becomes rather of 'how best to realize R2P objectives' to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (Bellamy, 2014). What then is the role of the state, authority and international community in fulfilling its obligations to prevent, react and rebuild?

Machsom Watch, or Checkpoint Watch, is an informal grassroots women's organization comprising of elderly Israeli Jewish women who monitor the checkpoints between Israel and Palestine and in the West Bank, with the intention of publicizing the reality of Israel's Occupation in the Occupied Territories. They started monitoring the checkpoints during the Second Intifada (2000-2005) when the checkpoints were in dire conditions and guarded heavily by army personnel. Since then, the infrastructure of the checkpoints have improved and a bureaucratic permit regime controls movement at the checkpoints. As such the activities of Machsom Watch has gradually shifted to monitoring agricultural gates in the seam zone area, permit office amongst others activities. There is no hierarchy or chain of command in Machsom Watch. The women are free to pursue their activities as long as it fits into the larger agenda of promoting human rights and protesting against the occupation. They write report of what they see which is shared publicly on their website, with journalists and sent to the Members of Israel's Parliament, Knesset.

I went to Israel as a visiting researcher at Tel Aviv University under the Erasmus + International Credit Mobility Program. This allowed me to interview women from Machsom Watch and go on field trips with them to their duty stations. This study uses qualitative data collected from interviews and field visits to the checkpoints, agricultural gates and areas in the West Bank.

Chapter Division

Chapter 1, Introduction, provides a very brief overview of the larger background and concepts of the study. Here introduced to the Responsibility to Protect, the research puzzle and the case study is briefly introduced.

The theoretical underpinning of the study are discussed in Chapter 2. Here, the background of feminist security studies is discussed in detail. The provisions of Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Responsibility to Protect are delineated. These discussions lead to the research puzzle i.e. the missing link between WPS and R2P. Drawing from the aforementioned concepts namely, feminist security studies, the WPS Agenda and R2P we arrive at the leading research question: *where are the women in R2P?* This is followed by a literature review of the academic work done in this regard. Much of the literature on gender and R2P begins with a common consensus, acknowledging a lack of gender inclusivity in the formulation of R2P. Starting from there, other works on gender, WPS and R2P is elucidated.

In Chapter 3, the case study and methodology are introduced. The background of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the applicability of R2P in the conflict are examined. Then Machsom Watch is presented along with the background and implications of the checkpoints they monitor. The chapter ends with the details of the methods used for this research. Data collection, data analysis, limitations and the impact of COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic on the participants and this researcher is discussed

Chapter 4 presents findings of the research. The chapter addressed the question of ‘where are the women.’ The findings are divided into larger themes and supported with quotes from data collected. The findings are further analyzed to understand the roles of Machsom watch women in the larger conflict

In Chapter 5, the findings of the research are interpreted through a gender lens. A gender analysis is examined by looking at the juxtaposition of Machsom Watch women and Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints. Finally links are made to WPS and R2P, that positions the women of Machsom Watch within these frameworks.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Underpinnings

Before exploring the main themes of this study i.e. gender in the responsibility to protect, it is important understand what drives the question. This chapter covers the theoretical background of concepts leading the research question: Feminist Security Studies, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Responsibility to Protect. These concepts help build up the research puzzle, which we arrive to at the end of the chapter.

Feminist Security Studies

The end of the Cold War brought new notions of security into the forefront by an increasing scholarship of feminist theorists. These new interventions are grounded in the *critical security studies*¹ literature that question the realist school of thought on which traditional IR and Security Studies are instituted. The epistemological and ontological foundations of conventional IR and security studies adhere to a rationalist state centric lens which draw up rational testable propositions modelled on individual market behaviour, logical to state survival in an ‘anarchial’ international system (Tickner, 2004). This approach is deemed unfit by feminist security scholars who transcend and subvert realist ideas of state security in the first place. Feminist theories, that start at individual levels embedded in socio-politico-economic hierarchies, are therefore sociological (Tickner, 2004).

Ackerly, Stern and True (2006) explore varied methodologies in feminist security scholarship that destabilize ‘familiar sites of international relations’ such as ‘military and foreign policy establishments’ to (re)constitute meanings of security and power through “unconventional sites,” such as “conducting fieldwork” among “activist groups in conflict zones, and with subjects of study that have been traditionally absent from IR, such as women and marginalized communities”(cited in Agathangelou & Turcotte, 2008). These methodologies that aim not only to understand the international arena but also injustices, make feminist methods not an event but, in the words of Stean (2005) a journey of ‘critique, revealing, reformulation and reflexivity (Sjoberg, 2009). For example, in recent feminist scholarship Parpat (2019) reimagines ‘silence’ as a form of agency or a form of power. Challenging assumptions of ‘speech as power’ and ‘silence as weakness’, Parpat (2019), reframes silence as a means of survival, coping, healing and resistance.

Traditionally IR and security studies are based on ideas of power and rationality, traits that are attributed to masculinity and on which women’s voices are considered ‘inauthentic’ (Tickner, 1992). The contents of Security Studies since the end of the Second World War and throughout the Cold War has predominantly been ‘high politics or matters relating to the existence of national security i.e., protecting the nation-state from foreign threats. Practices of politics and war have been sustained by men conforming to the dominating practice of treating matters of security from a narrow state-centric lens and therefore are not ‘universally valid and constitute only a proportion of relevant insight’ (Stamnes, 2012). This discourse which exempts the lived experiences of women prevents them from being actors in the stage of international politics (Tickner, 1992). Such archetypes of men as ‘Just Warriors’ and women as ‘Beautiful Souls’ (Elshtain, 1987 cited in Blanchard 2003) reinforces gendered constructions of what is allowed and not allowed in the public domain of international politics.

¹ Critical Security Studies is a body of knowledge that emerged during the early post-Cold War era. Scholars questioned state centric formulations of security, arguing: who and what is being secured. See Peoples, Columba, and Nick Vaughan-Williams. 2020. *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge; Mutimer; Alan. 2016. “Critical Security Studies: A Schimatic History.” In *Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford University Press; Krause, Keith, and Michael C. Williams. 2002. *Critical Security Studies: Concepts And Strategies*. Routledge.

What started as a recognition of the absence of gender in matters of national and international security has since snowballed into the vast literature of Feminist Security Studies today. Blanchard (2003) delineates four ways in which feminist security scholars have enriched the notions of security:

- i. by investigating the invisibility of women in international security and politics,
- ii. by questioning the extent to which women are secured by the state
- iii. by contesting essentialist peaceful notions of women and
- iv. by expanding understandings of gender so as to include concepts of masculinity to explain security.

FSS includes approaches, for instance, that pay attention to the workings of gender in order to ask questions about security; it also includes scholarship that refuses any line of distinction that separates 'security' from the workings of gender. As such, FSS is located at the crossroads of security studies, feminist international relations and feminist theory (which considers gender as one of many intersecting relations of power) (Stern & Wibben, 2015)

'Where are the women?'" asks Enloe (2014, 2nd edition). By exploring this omission, she challenges mainstream descriptions of international politics that treat men's roles and experiences as normative and universally valid. This leading question of asking where the women are leads to an investigation of the experiences of women, previously thought to be irrelevant, and the varied ways their roles impact and support narratives of national security (Enloe, 2014). She exposes what lies hidden from public view, about the hospitality of diplomatic wives in private homes that facilitate informal negotiations or the role of sex workers in boosting male soldier's morale in military bases. Her curiosity is reflected in the works of other feminist scholars of the time who were beginning to recognize this missing link. Apart from highlighting the significance of women in security matters, feminist security scholars also point to the significance of gender in understanding and addressing security matters such as female suicide bombers, sexual violence as weapons of war, women's peace activism etc. (Sjoberg, 2009). By making women's experiences visible, feminist security studies offer a glimpse into '*how gender relations have contributed to the way in which the field of international relations is conventionally constructed and to re-examine the traditional boundaries of the field*' (Tickner, 1992)

Recognizing this, feminist security scholars add a category of analysis to security: gender, which offers a more complete picture of security that is reflective of the real world. In doing so, gender is a '*relevant empirical category and analytical tool to understand global power relations as well as a normative position from which to construct alternative world orders*' (True, 2013). Gender matters as a '*constitutive and causal factor*' in theories and practices of IR and security studies in order to

- i. broaden understandings of security to include the security of those left out in security analyses
- ii. as a causal variable which affects states security seeking behaviour (as most states are guided by their identities which are based on masculine characteristics
- iii. epistemological implications for theory and practice of security by addressing gender subordination (Sjoberg, 2009)

Gender is a social construct, created out of cultural and historical norms and practices which ascertain expectations from one's biological body i.e., sex. These expectations encompass '*roles, responsibilities, aptitudes, behaviours and perceptions shaped by society and assigned to men and women*' ((Nduwimana, 2000). Gender is crucial in constructing social life, institutions and identities which in turn reinforce notions of gender i.e., traits associated with masculinity and femininity. Often these notions perpetuate essentialist characteristics of men as aggressive, proactive, warrior like whereas women are portrayed as passive, supportive, victims.

Unfortunately, an acknowledgment of *gender* in public awareness and political importance is often treated as a polite term for *sex*, meaning ‘gender research’ is interpreted as ‘research on women’ and ‘adding a gender dimension’ means ‘including women’ (Bryson, 2002). Gender, used as a term meaning women (or men) does not take into consideration how intricately it affects global politics (Sjoberg, 2019).

Understanding how gender works then means understanding power relations and the hierarchy it creates. Wilcox opines that gender assigns symbolic meanings to sex in the way that it places higher value on traits associated with masculinity (cited in Sjoberg, 2009). For example, in the United States, masculinism that pervades every aspect of politics, values aggression and autonomy, thereby placing more credibility and power upon men (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995 cited in Borrelli 1997).

Feminist scholars have analysed concepts of security, nuclear weapons, armament and disarmament from a gender perspective. Cohn et al (2005) discuss how gendered language used to discuss international politics; in the ways masculinity is a synonym for military action or armament. This connection is also seen in the case of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as noted in the case of Indian politician saying “*we had to prove that we are not eunuchs*” after testing of nuclear weapons in 1998 (ibid). Rosenberg (2020) on the other hand offers an alternative to the associations of disarmament being feminizing or emasculating. Using Sweden as a case study, she eschews assumptions of nuclear armament/disarmament with masculinity/femininity respectively and focuses on historical context with the intention to reconstruct gender and its links to nuclear security strategies.

In the words of Sjoberg (2009), “*failure to recognize gender hierarchy makes IR scholarship less descriptively accurate and predictively powerful for its omission of this major force in global politics.*” However, it is important to note that there is no single gendered experience or gendered based perspective on IR or international security since each person experiences gender differently across cultures, bodies, language and identities (Sjoberg, 2009). Nonetheless, research of feminist security scholars goes on to challenge mainstream concepts of security and add previously marginalized nuances to the discourse

Feminist Security Studies critically engage with mainstream security studies to include security of all individuals and violence in all forms (Tickner, 2011). This entails studying the gendered consequence that those concepts of security have on individual lives. Militarization², a key concept of security, and its associations with masculinity is questioned by Detraz (ibid) and Enloe (2014) in the many ways it creates gendered consequences for individual security. In the case of military service, masculinity and its associated traits of toughness and lack of emotion is key in turning men into soldiers (ibid). Esteemed masculinity comes at a price of femininity being trodden upon or wholly rejected. It enforces a hierarchy which sustains notions of men as protectors and women as vulnerable and/or exploitable.

For example, links between military service and citizenship creates a notion of who is deemed a ‘true’ citizen while excluding those who are not allowed to enrol in military service i.e., women, people from marginalized communities and people from LGBTQ communities (Detraz, 2013, p 1794). Even though women may be allowed to participate in combat roles, they are required to uphold militarized masculinity as seen in the Abu Ghraib Incident. This only goes on to show that increased participation of women does not necessarily undo generations of militarized masculine culture. In militarized societies, where masculinity is

² *Militarization is a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to be depend on its well-being on militaristic ideas. The more militarization transforms an individual or a society, the more that individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal. Militarization, that is, involves cultural as well as institutional, ideological and economic transformations.*’ (Enloe, 2000 cited in Detraz 2013)

made to seem 'natural', security is deeply gendered where men hold most political influence and women's voices and influence are silenced (Enloe, 2004). Gendered nature of international politics and security is self-perpetuating in the ways it continues to valorise masculinity and subordinate femininity.

Cockburn's (2010) research encapsulates a feminist analysis of war evolving from their proximity to armed conflict, activism and positionality as women concluding that patriarchal gender relations increase tendencies towards war. Her research encapsulates a nuanced analysis of war that includes gender, culture, peacetime-wartime differences which is skewed towards masculine traits of authority, coercion and violence that serves and requires militarism. She warns against the production of gender identities, 'armed, angry men, victimized femininities' which continue the cycle of armed conflict. Her gender perspective on armed conflict does not only point to different roles of men and women in armed conflict but enables us to see how gender roles become more rigid during build up to war, which in turn represents an early warning sign for conflict.

Drawing from these gendered viewpoints, feminist security scholars challenge state centric notions of security. Not unlike Copenhagen School Feminist Security Scholars critique '*statist versions of security that treat the survival and well-being of institution as more important than the survival and well-being of individuals*' (Detraz, 2013). Even the use of abstract concepts such as 'state' or 'system' removes the gendered agency of individuals from IR and security discourse (True, 2013). Feminist security scholars focus on the gendered individual security as a consequence of state centric high politics. This kind of research challenges a one-dimensional view of security, away from the proverbial 'war room', to include individuals who are affected by the decisions made there. Wars and interventions waged under the guise of protecting women perpetuate a cycle of violence, sexual, physical and structural. It raises a feminist security scholar's concern of who is being secured.

Recognizing that secure states often create insecure people, feminist security scholars analyse security of individuals and communities which are related to matters of national and international security (Sjoberg, 2009). Investigations of feminist security scholars like Enloe (2014) and Moon (2009) expose military prostitution in the name of state security through incidents of military prostitution³ in United States military bases around the world. The personal is indeed the political and even the international as demonstrated by the Korean, Okinawan, Filipina women who were subject to sexual and domestic and even life-threatening violence by servicemen in a system of 'central and local government policies' between the US military and the respective Asian society (Moon, 2009, Ceretti, 2016). The issue of comfort women⁴ of the Japanese military has borne the consequences of security in ways that are personal and relevant in international relations and security. These works support Tickner's (1992) claim that hegemonic understandings of security systematically overlook the practical experiences of insecurity among members of marginalized groups, and among women across the entire social spectrum (cited in Sa'ar et al, 2011). These works identify a theme in FSS that bring to the fore insecurities of marginalized groups.

Sexual violence in war is a recurrent phenomenon considered assumptive in war since times immemorial. However, the armed conflict of the late 20th century brought about new discourses and fervent discussions about wartime rape. Stark and Wessells (2012) reframe rape as i. 'strategic, political and ideological weapon', ii. as a hyperexpression of masculinities, iii. as violence against enemy communities. Wartime rape is also a form of identity politics in conflicts between racial or ethnic groups (Weitsman, 2008). During the intrastate ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the early 1990s, sexual

³ Prostitution catering to, and sometimes organized by, the military (Moon, 2019)

⁴ See Norma, Caroline. 2016. *The Japanese Comfort Women and Sexual Slavery during the China and Pacific Wars*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/the-japanese-comfort-women-and-sexual-slavery-during-the-china-and-pacific-wars>

violence took to violent extremes in the form of state-sanctioned rape, forced impregnation policies and devastations against women from opposite ethnicities (ibid). Study of sexual violence and rape during war involves study of power, masculinities and its gendered consequences. Apart from the focus of wartime rape on women, some scholars study wartime rape from the perspective of perpetrators. In a study of wartime rape committed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Baaz & Stern (2008) talk about the need to understand local contexts of warring in order to understand rape beyond the discourses of gender hierarchies. This focus on sexual violence, rape and gendered impacts of war have broadened concepts of security (Sjoberg, 2009) to transcend borders and territory.

In conclusion, through the limited but sophisticated analysis in issues of security studies, feminist security scholars have laid out four foundational arguments:

- i. by critically analysing traditional concepts and theories in security, they have exposed a gender bias in core security concepts as the state, violence, war and peace
- ii. through theoretical and empirical research on the roles of women in conflict
- iii. by reframing debates about security (nuclear strategy, peacekeeping, militarization) to highlight gendered language and assumptions
- iv. by bringing into focus sexual violence in war and gendered participation in armed conflict (Sjoberg, 2009).

Generations of practices and hierarchies have placed gender as a second thought or as subfield of security studies. Feminist scholars continue to challenge core assumptions, concepts and ontological presuppositions of the field (Tickener cited in Sjoberg, 2009). This feminist intervention does not come without resistance. Keohane (1998) insisted on scientific methods: testing propositions with evidence for feminist scholars to deliver their message efficiently (Tamang, 2016).

Women, Peace and Security

An important parallel to the development of feminist security literature were the global commitments to women's issues. Though the history of women, peace and security can be traced back to 1915, during the First World War, when women from Europe and the United States gathered to bring an end to the war and proposed women's participation in peace processes (Kirby & Shepard, 2016), it was the UN recognition in 2000 that gave the movement substantial influence. Additionally, the changing security environment from interstate to intrastate conflicts, intervention in intrastate conflicts, challenges to absolute principles of state sovereignty framed the groundwork for the passing of a new type of United Nations Security Council Resolution that focus on women in peace and security (Tryggestad, 2009)

The Beijing Declaration and Global Platform for Action which was adopted at the 4th World Conference in 1995 started the momentum for deliberations of women's issues in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) networks formed the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in order to rally and advocate for United Nations Security Council Resolution (hereafter UNSCR) 1325. Their goals were i. to make gender a relevant component of the workings in the Security Council, either with Member States, fact finding missions or peacekeeping operations, ii. to reinforce protection mechanisms for women in conflict and bring in gender perspectives in conflict prevention and DDR programs iii. to shift the focus of women from victims to actors in peace processes (Cohn et al., 2004).

After much mobilization and lobbying on issues of gender, peace and security by various women's groups and networks, the United Nations Security Council endorsed the 'ground-breaking' Resolution 1325 in October 2000. It was the first time, women's experiences in conflict and post conflict situations acknowledged in the UN Security Council (Cohn et al., 2004, Tryggestad, 2009). Eventually under the overarching umbrella of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda the UN Security Council adopted nine more resolutions:

UNSCR 1820(2008), UNSCR 1888(2009), UNSCR 1889(2009), UNSCR 1960(2010), UNSCR 2106(2013), UNSCR 2122(2013), UNSCR 2242(2015), UNSCR 2272(2016) and UNSCR 2467(2019) (UNDP, 2019). The provisions of WPS Agenda, especially UNSCR 1325 can be separated into three themes of representation, gender perspective and protection (Tryggstad, 2009)

The Key Issues of the WPS Agenda are as follows:

1. UNSCR 1325(2000)- Calls for: i. Increased participation of women at decision making levels in all institutions for conflict prevention, management and resolution, ii. Ensuring a gender component in peacekeeping missions that includes training, direction, participation of and for the needs of women, iii. Adopting a gender perspective that includes participation, inclusion and implementation in peace processes and agreements including DDR mechanisms, iv. Protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and adhere to international law and previous ratified conventions related to such crimes v. Active support and information dissemination of the Secretary General regarding the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, their participation and gender mainstreaming of all peace processes.
2. UNSCR 1820(2008)- i. Recognizes rape and sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity and an act of genocide which has dire consequences on international peace and security ii. Calls for all parties to stop such acts, ensure justice for victims, particularly women and girls and take action against perpetrators iii. Promote prevention of rape and sexual violence through training, awareness and accountability programs, iv. Encourage consultations with women and women led organizations to formulate protection and assistance mechanisms for women affected and made vulnerable by violence, particularly sexual violence, in armed conflict v. Requests support of the Secretary-General in reporting and disseminating information related to trends of systematic use of such sexual violence against women, prevention measures and implementation of such measures.
3. UNSCR 1888(2009)- i. Echoes the concerns of UNSCR 1820 (2008) related to preventing sexual violence in armed conflict ii. Calls upon all international, regional, national and local institutions to better address the concerns of sexual violence through accountability procedures, support for victims, information sharing across UN missions and bodies, iii. deployment of more female military and police personnel and Women Protection Advisors (WPA) in peacekeeping missions iv. Develop joint strategies between member states and UN to combat sexual violence v. Strengthen reporting of Secretary-General through collaboration with other relevant UN commissions
4. UNSCR 1889(2009)- i. Encourages and supports women's participation in all stages of peace processes ii. Focuses on the needs of physical, socio-economic, sexual and reproductive health and needs of women in post-conflict peacebuilding processes including DDR, political and economic decision making iii. Reporting by the Secretary General on the analysis, challenges, measures and recommendations for the needs of women in post-conflict situations.
5. UNSCR 1960(2010)- i. Reaffirms the need to end sexual violence during armed conflict through rigorous reporting, commitments, monitoring and analysis, ii. Encourages collaboration, cooperation and participation of UN Representatives, peacekeeping missions, gender advisors and women in local and civil society organizations in reporting, monitoring and analysis of sexual violence in conflict.
6. UNSCR 2106(2013)- i. Recognizing that rape and sexual violence in armed conflict constitute a war crime, crime against humanity or an act of genocide calls upon the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators by relevant judiciary bodies to deliver

justice to victims ii. Encourages deployment of Women Protection Advisors and Gender Advisors in UN peacekeeping, political and humanitarian missions to ensure implementation of resolutions on women, peace and security particularly sexual violence iii. Urges endeavors to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict by women organizations, local civil society, peacekeeping missions or by the use of sanctions iv. Support health and sexual violence related concerns, such as HIV and AIDS in all post conflict peace processes.

7. UNSCR 2122(2013)- i. Encourages the implementation of UNSCR 1325 through provisions of gender equality, empowerment, protection and participation in conflict and post conflict mechanisms, including political processes and justice mechanisms, ii. Recognizes the need to combat transfer of small arms and weapons that are used to commit gender-based violence against women
8. UNSCR 2242(2015)- i. Reiterates the women, peace and security agenda as a cross cutting theme in all matters relating to international peace and security, such as violent extremism, terrorism and counter terrorism ii. Underlines the role of men as supporting partners in prevention of armed conflict and promoting women in peace building, post conflict situations, iii. Echoes the support for women's representation at all decision-making levels in all peace and conflict processes through funding, training, planning iv. Use of gender indicators, gender analysis and gender expertise for implementation and monitoring of women, peace and security agenda in UN bodies, missions, representations.
9. UNSCR 2272(2016)- i. Encourages strict investigation and accountability of UN peacekeepers involved in perpetrating sexual exploitation and abuse⁵ by troop contributing countries, member states and Secretary General ii. Protecting and supporting victims through medical and psychological support as well as through justice mechanisms
10. UNSCR 2467 (2019)- i. Underscores the demand to prevent, respond and eliminate sexual violence in conflict through commitments and implementation policies by UN bodies, experts, Member States, local, regional and national bodies ii. Document and investigate sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations ensuring protection, prioritizing needs and access to justice for victims by adopting a survivor centered approach.

In brief, the WPS Agenda encompasses four pillars:

- i. Prevention – of conflict and violence in conflict and post- conflict situations
- ii. Participation - in all levels of peace and security processes
- iii. Protection - from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)
- iv. Relief and Recovery - relief needs are met and agency of women in conflict and post-conflict situations are strengthened. (UNDP, 2019)

Through these resolutions, the WPS agenda has been acknowledged on the security agenda of the UNSC. A great deal of literature emerged in the wake of WPS Agenda ranging from

⁵ Allegations of sexual abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel in UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was the cause of such outrage . See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/01/521142-un-officials-name-countries-whose-troops-are-accused-sexually-abusing-minors>

policy and practical recommendations⁶, implementation guides, National Action Plans and critiques.

WPS Agenda has been criticized for slow implementation, operationalization, lack of accountability, focusing on essentialist nature of men and women during armed conflict, ignoring ‘continuous and persistent power relations’ (Janson & Eduards, 2016), structural challenges, reliance on traditional security actors like the police and military, amongst others⁷. One of the major criticisms of WPS Agenda, is its inherent portrayal of women as either victims or as peaceful beings. However, UNSCR 1820 (2008) makes references to activities of women, in civil society, women led organizations or as peacekeepers or police’ that empowers them from being ‘subjects’ of security to ‘agents’ of security (Shepherd, 2011). Nevertheless, the WPS Agenda is crucial in giving women a platform to be a part of the UN international peace and security agenda. The significance of the WPS Agenda as a part of the Security Council is a ‘radical step towards the empowerment of women and sustainable peace’ (Cohn et al., 2004)

The Responsibility to Protect

The late 20TH century saw mass atrocities of a scale reminiscent of the Holocaust. The optimism at the end of the Cold War was hardly long-lived as the world looked on at the mass killings and genocide in Somalia and Rwanda in the 1990s. The controversy of military intervention as in Kosovo 1999 or the lack thereof as in Rwanda 1994 has drawn debates around effectiveness, legality, sovereignty, human rights, humanitarianism and its possible misuse or manipulation (ICISS, 2001).

These issues were reflected in Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s appeal during the 54th session of UN General Assembly in September 1999 to the international community to address these issues in a way that best served humanity while respecting notions of sovereignty of nations. In response the Government of Canada established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to

‘build a broader understanding of the problem of reconciling intervention for human protection purposes and sovereignty; more specifically, it was to try to develop a global political consensus on how to move from polemics – and often paralysis – towards action within the international system, particularly through the United Nations’ (ibid)

The resulting outcome of ICISS was the report titled ‘The Responsibility to Protect’, referred to as R2P. The basis of R2P was the idea that sovereign states have the responsibility to protect its citizens from mass atrocities, and when they were unable to unwilling to do so, the responsibility fell on the larger international community. The responsibility of the international community in this regard is: firstly, to prevent such atrocities by addressing its root or direct cause, secondly to use diplomatic, humanitarian or as the last resort military

⁶ See UN Women. 2015. *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/a-global-study-on-the-implementation-of-united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325/> (March 30, 2021). UNDP. 2019. “Parliamentary Handbook on The Women, Peace and Security Agenda.”

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/parliament-as-partners-supporting-women-peace-and-security-agend.html>.

⁷ For critiques of WPS Agenda see Hudson, Natalie Florea. 2013. *UNSCR 1325: The Challenges of Framing Women’s Rights as a Security Matter*. Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. Jansson, Maria, and Maud Eduards. 2016. “The Politics of Gender in the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 18(4): 590–604. Tryggestad, Torunn L. 2009. “Trick or Treat? The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.” *Global Governance* 15(4): 539–57. Thomson, Jennifer. 2019. “The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and Feminist Institutionalism: A Research Agenda.” *International Studies Review* 21(4): 598–613. Shepherd, Laura. 2011. “Sex, Security and Superhero(in)Es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics - INT FEM J POLIT* 13: 504–21. Cohn, Carol, Helen Kinsella, and Sheri Gibbings. 2004. “Women, Peace and Security Resolution 1325.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6(1): 130–40.

measures to prevent further suffering and lastly, to assist in reconstruction, reconciliation or recovery after such measures have been implemented. The report specifically prioritizes prevention and less coercive measures rather than military intervention. Additionally, it deems the UN Security Council as the authoritative figure to permit military intervention, but also lays alternative provisions within the UN framework in case of untimely or unreasonable response.

R2P was endorsed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004) and in his report *'In larger freedom'* (2005). In the reports he highlighted the responsibility of states to protect its populations, noting that *sovereignty implies responsibility*. It is the duty of the state to protect its civilians and in failing to do so, the principles of collective security dictate that the responsibility must be taken up by the international community in accordance to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 2004, p.22). Eventually during the United Nations World Summit in 2005, all Member States formally accepted the responsibility of each State to protect its citizens from four major crimes: genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p. 30). They agreed to assist the state to fulfil this responsibility. Lastly, in case the state was unable or unwilling to do so, they agreed to take collective timely and decisive action, through the Security Council, military means being the last resort (ibid). These are also considered the three pillars of R2P.

Subsequently, R2P has been referenced in more than 80 UN Security Council Resolutions with respect to states and its responsibility to its citizens, 50 Human Rights Council resolutions and 13 General Assembly resolutions (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2021). In response to escalating violence on civilians by respective regimes, UN Security Council adopted resolutions explicitly referencing the responsibility to protect in Libya (2011), Cote d'Ivoire (2011), South Sudan (2011), Yemen (2011), Syria (2012) and Central African Republic (2013) (Butler, 2016)

These interventions generated complex debates⁸ on the principle of state sovereignty, legality and implications of the intervention, application and implementation, its principles and limits, selectivity, inaction or differences among Member States. Intervention in Libya marked a milestone in R2P evolution from a 'battle around ideas to battle around implementation' yet opinions remain divided among actors who support the notion of human security over state security and those who see its potential for abuse (Brockmeier et al, 2016). Amongst such debates, Applegarth and Block (2010) highlight the paradox of R2P leading to a decline in the appeal of humanitarian intervention, while being designed to actually support it (Butler, 2016). Practical aspects of R2P continue to be criticized since it lacks clear cut operational

⁸ For details see Nasu, Hitoshi. 2011. "The UN Security Council's Responsibility and the 'Responsibility to Protect.'" In *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill N.V, 377–418. Hoffman, Gregor P. 2015. *Ten Years R2P - What Doesn't Kill a Norm Only Makes It Stronger? Contestation, Application and Institutionalization of International Atrocity Prevention and Response*. Frankfurt/M. See Junk, Julian. 2016. "Testing Boundaries: Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Scope of R2P." *Global Society* 30(1): 78–93. Bellamy, Alex J. 2010. "The Responsibility to Protect—Five Years On." *Ethics & International Affairs* 24(2): 143–69. Brockmeier, Sarah, Oliver Stuenkel, and Marcos Tourinho. 2016. "The Impact of the Libya Intervention Debates on Norms of Protection." *Global Society* 30(1): 113–33. Rotmann, Philipp, Gerrit Kurtz, and Sarah Brockmeier. 2014. "Major Powers and the Contested Evolution of a Responsibility to Protect." *Conflict, Security & Development* 14(4): 355–77. Thakur, Ramesh. 2011. "Libya and the Responsibility to Protect: Between Opportunistic Humanitarianism and Value-Free Pragmatism." *Security Challenges* 7(4): 13–25.

guidelines, which is cited as reasons for implementation and overstepping mandates as in Libya (Rotmann et al., 2014), or failures as in Syria or Myanmar (Russo, 2020).

The vast scholarship that emerged from debates of intervention shadowed the precedence of prevention over intervention. The Responsibility to Protect states that “prevention is the most important dimension of the responsibility to protect” (ICISS, 2001). The Report lays out the responsibility of the sovereign state, its communities and institutions and the international community in preventing deadly conflict through development initiatives, rule of law, dialogue or if need be, through tougher measures. 2P Report emphasizes prevention efforts to reduce the need for intervention altogether. It notes the “*increasingly significant role played by NGOs, particularly in the context of early warning efforts and helping galvanize domestic and foreign public opinion in support of prevention measures.*” (ICISS, 2001). The international community in accordance with UN resolutions, has a responsibility to support local initiatives that address structural triggers of conflict, while hoping to avoid intervention all together. R2P prioritizes protection activities short of military measures, through mainly, early warning mechanisms, preventative toolbox and political will (ibid). Yet, these preventative measures achieve lesser attention than the question of intervention.

Another point of contestation, and the focus of this study, is the visible absence of gender within Responsibility to Protect. Only two out of twelve members of the ICISS were women, pointing to a lack of gender expertise beginning at the inception of R2P. The report mentions women three times in its 108 pages, out of which two times are mentioned in the context of rape. The need to address this gender blindness is imperative so as to reflect the commitments of the United Nations to gender issues and also for a successful implementation of R2P (Bond and Sherret, 2006). Nevertheless, R2P is gaining acknowledgement as demonstrated by the vast literature critiquing it or advancing it. Axworthy and Rock (2009) claim it to be an ‘unfinished businesses. Indeed, current debates about R2P in Myanmar⁹ and most recently in Xinjiang¹⁰, China, prove to show how the norm is relevant and still evolving.

Research Puzzle

Both WPS Agenda and R2P were formulated at a time when discourse around security began shifting from a state-centric approach towards a human-centric approach. The WPS Agenda sought to empower women in matters of peace and security. The Agenda refers to women in conflict, in need of protection, while also allowing them to participate in prevention and rebuilding activities. The WPS Agenda catapulted women into the peace and security arena. Similarly, R2P is based on the idea of protection to ensure international peace and security. Themes of prevention and reconstruction run deep within R2P. Both R2P and WPS Agenda were endorsed and legitimized by the UN Security Council. However, there seems to be an obvious missing link between the two agendas. Despite two decades of UN’s efforts to promote women’s rights since the passing of landmark USCR 1325, gender analysis, gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming remains largely missing from R2P discourse. The expectations of the WPS Agenda are not reflected in R2P. The omission of women altogether and its minimal reference to women as victims is not representative of the WPS Agenda. A notable number of scholars have pointed to this lacuna within R2P central documents and discussions (Bond and Sherret, 2006; Davies et al, 2015; Stamnes, 2012; Murphy & Burke, 2015)

⁹ There has been three events that led to debates on R2P in Myanmar: Cyclone nargis, the Rohingya exodus and the recent military coup in 2021. See Evans, Gareth. 2021. “Applying R2P to Myanmar.” *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect*. <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/applying-r2p-to-myanmar/>; Kashfi, Mehdi, Sohrab Salahi, and Mohammad Sadeghi. 2020. “Feasibility of Implementing of R2P in Myanmar.” *International Journal of Pediatrics* 8(3): 10993–1; Junk, Julian. 2016. “Testing Boundaries: Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Scope of R2P.” *Global Society* 30(1): 78–93.

¹⁰ See Jacob, Cecilia, Adrian Gallagher, and Charles T. Hunt. 2021. “Pursuing Accountability and Protection for the Uighur and Muslim Minorities in China.” *Global Responsibility to Protect* 13(1): 5–8.

Thus, drawing from the aforementioned concepts namely, feminist security studies, the WPS Agenda and R2P we arrive at the leading research question: *where are the women in R2P?* Within R2P, the perspective of ‘where are the women’ requires exploring roles and experiences in the context of mass atrocities, apart from the ‘victim’ stereotype (Stamnes, 2012). This study draws on this line of thinking; to explore the agency of women in regarding this aspect of women and R2P. Though considerable attention is given to WPS Agenda and prevention of sexual violence in R2P, the agency of women in their ability to create change is not documented enough.

Literature Review

Much of the literature on gender and R2P begins with a common consensus, acknowledging a lack of gender inclusivity in the formulation of R2P (Stamnes, 2012; Spitka, nd; Davies et al, 2015; Kersten, 2014, Axworthy & Rock, 2009; Murphy & Burke, 2015, Dharmapuri, 2012 and more). Bond and Sherret (2006) draw on the various instances in which R2P is gender blind. The gender blindness in R2P begins at the composition of twelve ICISS members. Out of the twelve members of the ICISS, only one, Cote-Harper, had experience in gender issues. Archives of ICISS consultations on R2P show discussions on gender only twice: gendered impact of military intervention and need for misconduct accountability for peacekeepers. The report mentions women three times in its 108 pages, all in the context of rape victims. Gender is not mentioned even once. Though the report mentions the UN Charter, to support prevention and rebuilding, there is a lack of reference to the gender element in this regard. Women are rarely mentioned in R2P, except for the need to protect them from rape or as peacebuilders (Evans cited in Charlesworth, 2010).

A feminist critique of R2P asks ‘where are the women’ and ‘what work is gender doing’ (Charlesworth 2010; Stamnes, 2012). The first perspective seeks to reveal the omission of women and their activities from international relations, international law, politics, policy documents, peace processes, public statements and so on. By exploring this omission, this perspective challenges mainstream descriptions that treat men’s roles and experiences and roles as normative and universally valid. On the other hand, the second perspective of ‘how gender works’ investigates gender as fundamental in constructing social life, institutions and identities which in turn reinforce notions of gender (masculinity and femininity) and the social structures derived from them. In regard to R2P, atrocities like rape and SGBV assert notions of masculinity which in turn reinforce gender hierarchies in which masculinity is celebrated at the cost of femininity being revalorized. The importance of understanding the gender nuances during wartime is reiterated by Skjelsbaek (2012) particularly in relation to sexual violence.

Disconnect between R2P and WPS Agenda

There is a wide array of literature highlighting the disconnect between R2P and the WPS Security Agenda (Bond & Sherrret, 2012, Stamnes, 2012, Spitka, Charlesworth, 2010). Scholars support the argument that an opportunity to was neglected when R2P failed to integrate these global gender commitments. Davies et al, (2015) echo this missing link despite similarities between both norms’ intention to prevent atrocities. An opportunity to align R2P and WPS agenda would be to develop gender specific indicators in early warning prevention frameworks in order to recognize gender inequalities and hence risk of mass atrocities, for example by identifying SGBV before and outside armed conflict (Davies et al, 2015). Dharmapuri (2012) draws on the protection language of WPS, particularly UNSCR 1325, in relation to the need for particular groups of civilians to be protected from war crimes, for example women from rape and sexual violence However, deviating from the aforementioned narratives of missing link between WPS and R2P, she contends that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in peace and security operations has operationalized a gender perspective in R2P principles by recognizing SGBV as a war crime and by insisting on participation of women in various conflict and peace processes (Dharmapuri, 2012).

Implementation and operationalisation of gender aspects of R2P is also a recurrent concern among scholars and practitioners (Karlsrud & Solhjell, 2012; Bond & Sherret, 2012). There is a gap in consensus on the 'application and enforcement' of R2P tools (Spitka, 2010). She suggests examining the effectiveness of red lines in conflict, the crossing of which demands intervention. Similarly, Charlesworth (2010) critiques R2P's top down expertise laden approach which fails to empower local people, especially women as it does not take into account gendered structural inequalities against women.

R2P and Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is another theme that occurs within R2P and WPS literature owing to UNSCR 1820 of WPS Agenda which recognizes sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict as a basis for R2P protection principles (UNSC, 2008). This explicit recognition of SGBV as a war crime, crime against humanity or genocide, as opposed to sexual violence being a means of ethnic cleaning has slightly furthered a gender perspective in R2P. (Bond & Sherret, 2012).

This development follows the mass rapes and SGBV against women in the 1990s. However, this formulation positions women as victims in need of protection.

Protection language apropos to SGBV is frequent and thus criticized by Skjelsbaek (2012) as risking the agency and participation of women in these matters. She offers a perpetrator focused approach to prevent sexual violence by understanding the workings of gender i.e. what causes a perpetrator of sexual violence to behave that way during war and not during peace time. Bond & Sherret (2012) too agree that apart from sexual violence, the other ways conflict impacts women or the way women can participate in conflict and peace processes are mostly side lined. Roles and experiences of women can be as diverse as can be expected from a group so varied. They can be victims, perpetrators, combatants, participants, peacemakers, agents of change or merely bystanders (Murphy and Burke, 2015). These scholars step away from essentialist notions of women as victims in conflict by recognizing the engagement of women as active participants.

Through the example of the UN Mission in Chad (MINURCAT), Karlsrud & Solhjell (2012), demonstrate how the international community can assist governments in providing gender sensitive protection to their populations. By recognizing that a gender perspective includes not just physical protection but also identifying structural inequalities (such as access to justice for women against SGBV), MINURCAT was able to provide holistic protection, while questioning understandings of security that surpasses 'hard security' issues (Karlsrud & Solhjell, 2012).

Murphy and Burke (2015) draw connections between R2P and WPS, taking into consideration, gendered impact and forms of interventions in the context of violence against women. They focus on the extent to which gender based violence (GBV) has been invoked by actors to justify intervention. They conclude that apart from Afghanistan, women's needs are not usually acknowledged for intervention, contradicting commitments made by the international community to protect women. Cerretti (2016) argues against military intervention as a solution to sexual violence as it promotes armed response over 'effective survivor centric responses' which wrongly results in a military centric narrative instead of accountability of perpetrators and the survivor. The notion of military intervention, Pillar Three of R2P to protect women is questioned by Spitka (n.d) and Charlesworth (2010). They contend the various way in which intervention harms rather than helps women, either through violence or through marginalization of women. Links between militarism and women has been documented by many feminist security scholars, often concluding that wars, and all forms of militarism sustain patriarchy at the cost of femininity¹¹. Spitka (n.d) meanwhile

¹¹ See Cohn, Carol. 2013. *Women and Wars: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures*. John Wiley & Sons.
Enloe, Cynthia. 2014. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. 2nd ed.

argues for measures stronger than prevention or participation i.e coercive measures and international consensus to protect populations from war crimes.

Integrating Gender into R2P Policy and Practices

Bond and Sherret (2006) offer a wholesome gender based analysis of R2P to improve R2P operationalization by integrating gender issues into its framework. They compile practical recommendations to engender R2P pillars of prevention, reaction and rebuilding. Davies et al, (2012) argue for the need of gender-specific indicators to recognize genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetuated by gender specific crimes such as mass rape, forced sterilization and abortions etc. Similar to Bond and Sherret's (2006) indicators, Davies et al (2012) explore the opportunities and challenges in relation to inclusion of gender inequality in early warning frameworks. Charlesworth (2010) suggests taking into account marginalisation, effect of militarization and systemic discrimination against women, instead of only intervention in order for R2P to promote women's equality. However, apart from Starnes (2012) and Bond & Sherret (2006), Davies et al., (2012) there is a dearth of literature on integrating R2P policies into practices.

Chapter 3: Background and Methodology

Background of the conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more than a century old. From the early 20th century, the conflict was centered on the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea by two national movements, the Palestinian national movement and the Jewish national movement. The territory, historically known as the Holy Land, is home to the holy religious sites of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Competing claims to the territory, based on historic and political narratives, later intensified the conflict into one of the oldest intractable conflicts in modern times. An intractable conflict is defined as ‘*protracted, irreconcilable, violent of zero-sum nature, total and central; parties involved in such conflicts have an interest in their continuation*’ (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006)

In November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181 that called for the partition of British controlled Mandatory Palestine (United Nations General Assembly, 1947). The resolution called for the creation of two separate states - one Jewish and one Arab - and the city of Jerusalem to be administered by an international regime. The withdrawal of the British and the creation of the State of Israel was met with violence between Jewish and Arab communities. This led to the 1948 War between Israel and neighboring Arab states (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria) who supported the Arab Palestinian state. The fighting came to an end in 1949 with an armistice signed between neighboring Arab states and Israel. This war granted legitimacy to the state of Israel but also started Palestinian dispossession and displacement (referred to as *al-Nakba*) (Peters & Newman, 2013). The disputed territory was now divided into the state of Israel, the West Bank controlled by Jordan and the Gaza Strip controlled by Egypt. Palestinians found themselves under occupation or became refugees.

The cycle of violence that erupted then between Arab and Jewish communities has not ended to this day. The decades following the 1948 conflict saw further Arab-Israeli wars: the 1956 Suez Crisis, the Six Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the Lebanon wars of 1982 and 2006. Israel’s significant victory in the Six Day War of 1967 led to the recapture of territory held by Jordan and Egypt. As a result, it created new geopolitical and demographic realities (idib) with the territories held previously by neighbouring Arab powers now coming under Israeli occupation.

The Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, which constitute the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), or ‘disputed territory’ (State of Israel, 2003) has numerous consequences¹² at the level territory, geography, economy, borders, populations, negotiations, and the status of Jerusalem. The Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza is argued to have gone beyond ‘mere’ occupation, with scholars and the international community using the terms ‘apartheid’, ‘late colonial occupation’, ‘settler colonialism’, or ‘colonial state’ to describe it (Hammami & Tamari, 2008; UNGA, 2008; Amoruso et al, 2019; B’Tselem, 2021). The international community has repeatedly expressed concern about the OPT and its populations. It declared ‘null and void’ measures taken by Israel to change the pre 1967 status quo on territory, including Jerusalem (UNSC, 1980, 2016). The conflict has been simplified and complexified by various narratives of colonialism, ethnicity, religion, underdevelopment, hegemony (Azar et al., 1978). It has generated immense literature in the academic field but also related to policy making, peace and conflict mechanisms, journalism, and media.

¹² See Arkadie, Brian Van. 1977. “The Impact of the Israeli Occupation on the Economies of the West Bank and Gaza.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6(2): 103–29. Efrat, Elisha. 2006. *The West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement*. Routledge. Newman, David. 2013. “Gush Emunim and the Settler Movement.” In *Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Routledge.

The conflict has witnessed intense terrorism, violence, suicide bombings, civilian attacks, clashes, revolts, riots and two Palestinian uprisings: the first *Intifada* (1987-1993) and the second *Intifada* (2000-2005). There have been numerous efforts¹³ by international, regional and grassroots organizations to broker peace. A watershed moment of peace effort appeared in 1977 when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat started an initiative to make peace with Israel (Peters & Newman, 2013, Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). The first peace treaty signed between Israel and Egypt in 1979 led to a normalization of diplomatic relations between the two¹⁴

The first Palestinian uprising, the first *Intifada* ((1987-1993) is understood as a people's resistance movement against Israeli occupation. The causes were poverty, humiliation, feelings of abandonment and loss of faith in armed resistance from abroad (Nasrallah, 2013). Following the first *Intifada* the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, signed between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, provided a brief respite from violence. During this time the idea of a 'two-state solution' which envisioned the co-existence of two states- one Palestinian and the other Israeli, was proposed by the representatives of Palestinian people, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). But this optimism did not last long¹⁵.

Poor implementation of and commitment to the Oslo Accords failed to reach a peaceful solution that was acceptable to both parties. Not long after the collapse of the peace process, the second *Intifada* (2000-2005) erupted marking a return to previous (if not larger) violence and bitterness. During the second *Intifada*, Israel began to build its 700-kilometer barrier wall, separating Palestinian and Israeli territory and people. In 2003 the Road Map for Peace Plan was introduced by the Middle East Quartet to lay out a detailed plan of action with timelines and targets to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005. However, the Road Map failed to achieve its objectives and its implementation was discontinued.

In 2005, Israel began to carry out a disengagement plan from remove Israeli occupation from the West Bank and Gaza (State of Israel, 2005). However, Israel continues to impose a land, sea, and air blockade in Gaza, controlling access to necessary facilities, infrastructure and humanitarian aid (Report of the Special Rapporteur, 2019). Since 2009, scholars and activists have been calling and debating¹⁶ for a one state solution that included Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. However, this solution has not yet formed a political movement of its own (Farsakh, 2011). The violence continues and the future of 'one land two peoples' remains bleak.

The Responsibility to Protect in Israel-Palestine

R2P refers to the obligation of a governing authority to protect its citizens from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes (henceforth, mass atrocity crimes).

¹³ See Hanieh, Akram. 2001. "The Camp David Papers." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30(2): 75–97. Cobban, Helena. 1995. "Israel and the Palestinians: From Madrid to Oslo and Beyond." In *Israel Under Rabin*, Routledge. Tocci, Nathalie. 2013. "The Middle East Quartet and (In)Effective Multilateralism." *The Middle East Journal* 67(1): 28–43. Espanioli, Nabila, and Dalia Sachs. 1991. "Peace Process: Israeli and Palestinian Women." *Bridges* 2(2): 112–19. Kuriansky, Judith. 2007. *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding Between Israelis and Palestinians*. Greenwood Publishing Group. Pundak, Ron. 2012. "More Relevant Than Ever: People-to-People Peacebuilding Efforts in Israel and Palestine." *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 18(2/3): 46–53. Maoz, Ifat. 2004. "Peace Building in Violent Conflict: Israeli-Palestinian Post-Oslo People-to-People Activities." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17(3): 563–74.

¹⁴ There has been more normalization of relations between Israel and Arab countries in recent years. See Ephron, Dan. 2020. "How Arab Ties With Israel Became the Middle East's New Normal." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/21/arab-ties-israel-diplomacy-normalization-middle-east/> (July 4, 2021).

¹⁵ See Hilal, Jamil. 2007. *Where Now for Palestine?: The Demise of the Two-State Solution*. Zed Books. See Barak, Oren. 2005. "The Failure of the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process, 1993–2000." *Journal of Peace Research* 42(6): 719–36.

¹⁶ See Farsakh, Leila. 2011. "The One-State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects." *Middle East Journal* 65(1): 55–71. Munayyer, Yousef. 2020. "There Will Be a One-State Solution." *Foreign Affairs*. (June 6, 2021).

The question of applicability of R2P in Israel-Palestine is contentious due to the issue of Palestinian territory, its governing authority and R2P principles of commitment.

Territory and Authority

The first debate is that of R2P principles. R2P applies to situations within the territory of a state, i.e, intra state. The legitimacy of the State of Palestine is not clear cut. In 2012, the UN General Assembly upgraded Palestine to ‘non-member observer state’ (UNGA, 2012). 138 out of 193 UN Member States recognize Palestine. If Gaza and the West Bank are a part of the State of Palestine, the conflict becomes an inter-state conflict (Rieff, 2014). Therefore, the applicability of R2P remains dubious.

Regarding the question of applicability of R2P in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the International Coalition for R2P (ICRtoP) (2014) made a statement based on the recognition of authority over these territories:

- i. If Gaza is considered a state of Palestine under the governing authority of Hamas, the responsibility to protect citizens within its territory would lie with Hamas
- ii. If Gaza is considered an occupied territory¹⁷ under Israeli authority, the responsibility to protect would lay on both the occupying power, Israel as well as the de facto authority Hamas based in the test of ‘effective control’ i.e., the ‘extent of capacity of each party to implement a particular measure to protect citizens’
- iii. When seen as an independent state under the control of de jure governing authority Palestinian Authority (PA) or de facto authority Hamas, the crisis becomes an inter-state conflict, with the respective authorities responsible for their own citizens within their territory.

If seen as an independent state of Palestine, the PA is responsible for its citizens in Gaza but is unable to fulfil its duty of protecting its citizens due to the armed conflict between Hamas and Israel and therefore needs assistance from the international community (Ercan, 2015). The responsibility for Palestinian’s citizens thus falls on the stance that one takes over Gaza’s (and West Bank) status (Schmidt, 2014). This standpoint is criticized for being a ‘narrow technical interpretation of R2P’ while ignoring the disputes related to ‘recognition, legitimate authority, de jure and de facto sovereignty’ (Hehir (2014)

Opinions remains divided on whether R2P is applicable to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Rudolph (2014) attributes International Humanitarian Law as relevant, rather than R2P to the protection of civilians in the conflict while Ercan (2015) opines that R2P is not the framework to view the situation. Critics have called out the hypocrisy and obsolescence of R2P as it has time and again failed to protect the vulnerable in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kearny, 2014, Reiff, 2014)

In fact, the responsibility lies with all parties: Israel as the occupying power, PA as the *de jure* authority and Hamas as *de facto* authority (Bellamy, 2014; Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, 2021). Israel has the responsibility to protect not only its citizens but also Palestinians in areas it occupies. Hamas has the responsibility to protect its citizens by not exposing them to threats¹⁸. The PA lacks the capacity and authority to protect its citizens. All parties have not been able or willing to fulfill its responsibility duties.

¹⁷ In 2005 Israel underwent a plan of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and North Samaria removing IDF installations and evicting Israeli citizens (State of Israel, 2013). But Israel maintains an effective sea, land and air blockade on Gaza since 2007 when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in the Battle of Gaza. See Migdalovitz, Carol. 2010. *Israel’s Blockade of Gaza, the Mavi Marmara Incident, and Its Aftermath*. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA523592>

Atrocity Crimes

R2P deals with mass atrocity crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The definitions of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity has been codified in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁹. Article 6 of the Rome Statute defines genocide as acts committed with intent to ‘destroy, in whole or in part’, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Such acts include killing, causing bodily or mental harm, forcible transfer, intentional physical destruction, preventing births and forcible transfer. Article 7 describes crimes against humanity as acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against civilian population with knowledge of the attack. Such attacks include but not limited to murder, extermination, enslavement, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced disappearances, crimes of apartheid, persecution against political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, gender groups, forcible deportations. Article 8 describes in detail the acts that ‘comprise war crimes as a part of a plan or policy or as a part of a large-scale commission of such crimes. They include breaches of the Geneva Conventions (1949) that include willful killing, torture, unlawful deportation, attacks against civilian populations or civilian objects, taking of hostages and other acts that infringe humanitarian law or laws of armed conflict.

There is no precise definition of ethnic cleansing or the acts that qualify as ethnic cleansing. A UN Commission of Experts mandated to investigate violations in former Yugoslavia described ethnic cleansing as ‘a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas’ (UNSC, 1994).

The question of whether these atrocity crimes are being committed in Israeli-Palestinian conflict is under heated debate. Two specialists in genocide Omer Bartov and Martin Shaw²⁰, debated the provocative question of Israel had committed genocide in 1948 led to two different standpoints: both agreed that some form of ‘ethnic cleansing did occur’, but Bartov refused to think of it as genocide whereas Shaw argued that any policies meant to destroy a group, even if not murder, comprises genocide (Beckerman, 2011). Given the current prolonged occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, some scholars warn of an ‘incremental genocide’ through policies and practices of that serve Israel and control Palestinians (Pappe, 2006; Ratner 2014; Lendman, 2010; Center for Constitutional Rights, 2016). Keshet (2006) argues that restrictions on mobility, bureaucratic control of a civilian population, apartheid roads are integral to a policy of ethnic cleansing.

On the hand these accusations have been dismissed as ‘ridiculous and baseless’ by some Jewish hand Israeli human rights lawyers (Sales, 2021). Michael Sfard (2020) an Israeli human rights lawyer opines that the crime of apartheid²¹ is being committed by Israeli perpetrators against Palestinian victims in the West Bank but draws the line at genocide saying “doesn’t even begin to meet the threshold of what genocide is, and I think it cheapens

¹⁸ There has been coverage stating that Hamas uses civilian and UN safe spaces to launch rockets and uses human shields. See <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg88835/html/CHRG-113hhrg88835.html>

¹⁹ See International Criminal Court. 2011. “Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.” <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf>

²⁰ Shaw, Martin. 2013. “Palestine and Genocide: An International Historical Perspective Revisited.” *Holy Land Studies* 12(1): 1–7. Shaw, Martin, and Omer Bartov. 2010. “The Question of Genocide in Palestine, 1948: An Exchange between Martin Shaw and Omer Bartov.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 12(3–4): 243–59.

²¹ Sfard, Michael. 2020. “The Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and the Crime of Apartheid: Legal Opinion - HaMoked.” <http://www.hamoked.org/Document.aspx?dID=Documents4329> (July 25, 2021).

the very important and grave concept of genocide” (cited in Sales, 2021). Additionally, the accusation of committing genocide is considered a serious affront to the Jewish people (Beckernan, 2011; Sales, 2021).

After the 2014-armed hostilities between Hamas and Israel, the Executive Director of the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (GCRP), argues that attacks on civilians and civilian property on both sides violate international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes (Adams, 2014). Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect noted high civilian casualties on both sides but also noted ‘disproportionate and indiscriminate’ use of force by the Israel Defense Forces and rocket attacks by Hamas into residential areas as ‘indiscriminate use of force’(Statement by the Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, on the situation in Israel and in the Palestinian Occupied Territory of Gaza Strip, 2014). They observed “*both parties are in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and these acts could constitute atrocity crimes*” (*idib*). The investigation of war crimes during this period has been initiated by the International Criminal Court (Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, 2021).

Conclusion

Despite disagreements on applicability of R2P and considering the cost of human life in the conflict, the question of R2P in Israel-Palestine is not of whether it is applicable or relevant. OCHA records 262 Israeli fatalities and 5951 Palestinian fatalities from 2018 TO 2021 (OCHA, 2021). It is beyond doubt that the *raison detre* of R2P to protect civilian is applicable here. The question then becomes rather of ‘how best to realize R2P objectives’ to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (Bellamy, 2014). What then is the role of the international community in fulfilling its obligations to protect? Pillar 2 of R2P requires the international community to assist respective authorities to protect its citizens. In the context of Gaza, the international community had condemned atrocities committed against its populations, used diplomatic pressure and public diplomacy, peacemaking efforts, capacity building for PA and providing humanitarian and development aid (Bellamy, 2014). Given the already fragile violent situation in Gaza and considering that the violence occurs in outbursts, preventative and non-military measures should be prioritized (Ercan, 2015). Eventually, if all these non-coercive measures fail, the UN has a responsibility to consider coercive measures. In this end, fulfilling R2P responsibilities depend on the willingness and the political will of Security Council to vote or veto for R2P’s Pillar 3 i.e. intervention.

The case study: Machsom Watch

Machsom²² Watch, or Checkpoint watch, is an informal organization comprising of 500 women volunteers who monitor the numerous checkpoints between Israel and Palestine, Palestinian villages, and military courts where Palestinians stand trial, with the intention of publicizing the reality of Israel’s Occupation in the Occupied Territories. The women document and write what they witness. It is shared publicly on their websites²³, with journalists and sent to the Members of Israel’s Parliament, Knesset. They believe that it is their duty to inform the Israeli public and the international community of the atrocities that are committed towards Palestinians in their name. The purpose of their work is political and humanitarian: to protest the checkpoints which, they believe, are a form of collective

²² Machsom means ‘checkpoint’ in Hebrew

²³ See <https://machsomwatch.org/en/about>

punishment to Palestinians and to protect Palestinian civil and human rights at the crossings (Kaufman, 2008).

In 2002, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Occupied Palestinian Territory recorded 705 permanent obstacles that control and regulate Palestinian movement across Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and into Israel (OCHA OPT, 2018). These obstacles, including the 700-kilometer barrier wall, were built after the second *Intifada*²⁴ (2000-2004) for security i.e., to prevent violent attacks against Israel and Israeli populations.

These checkpoints are located between Israel and Palestine and inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), successfully dissecting the territories into enclaves or islands (Kotef & Amir, 2011) and separating not only the Israeli population from the Palestinians but also Palestinians from other Palestinians (Keshet, 2006, p.55). A 2020 OCHA OPT survey records 593 movement obstacles (OCHA OPT, 2020). These obstacles comprise of checkpoints (71), partial checkpoints (108), earth mound (86), road gate (154), road block (68), earth wall (20), road barrier (49), trenches (3) and others (34) (ibid). These obstacles may be closed, intermittently staffed, permanently staffed by military personnel or unstaffed (B'Tselem²⁵, 2019).

At the checkpoint, Palestinian civilians must present one's proof of identity, mobility/work permit and allow one's baggage and body to be checked. These checkpoints, along with a complementary permit system, also serve to control and regulate Palestinian movement and to isolate Palestinian enclaves (Hass, Foreword, 2006). They have social, economic, and psychological implications on Palestinians trying or not trying to go through the trouble of crossing them (Said, 2007). In 2005, the checkpoints were upgraded into modernized 'terminals' in an attempt to normalize them, but these upgrades only serve to institutionalize or legitimize the occupation (Mansbach, 2009; AFSC, 2013).

Rationale

Robert Sack's theory of territoriality²⁶ has been used to analyze the checkpoints as a symbol of territoriality in action. By regulating movement these checkpoints create boundaries separating Israelis & Palestinians and Israel & Palestine as well as the power relations between them (Hallward, 2008). The checkpoints are also gendered in that they create a means for governing Palestinian bodies that are beneficial to the 'biopolitical' objectives of the Israeli state by creating a docile Palestinian labor force (Griffiths & Repo, 2018). Checkpoints are a control mechanism between Israel and Palestine, a stark symbol of the occupation and apartheid policy of Israel (Keshet, 2006, B'Tselem, 2021).

These checkpoints are not border crossings but rather shifting territorial boundaries to demarcate 'ours' and 'theirs' (Ginzburg, 2003 in Keshet, 2006). Keshet (2006) argues that the purpose of the checkpoints is military control of civilians, disruption of Palestinian lives and Palestinian state. According to the author, despite its official intention to prevent terror, the checkpoints actually create or inspire it (ibid). The procedures of waiting in long queues, subject to body and baggage checks, validity of permits, arbitrary detention at the whim of soldiers, humiliation, harassment, closure of checkpoints as 'punishment' (CPW Report, 2003 cited in Keshet, 2006, p. 58) amount to mistreatment and violation of human rights. What goes on in the checkpoints is often cited to be a form of collective punishment (Hammami, 2005; Keshet, 2006; Said, 2007).

²⁴ The Second Intifada or *Al- Aqsa* Intifada was the uprising of Palestinians against Israel after the failure of the peace negotiations in July 2000.

²⁵ B'Tselem is a non-profit group that monitors human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. See https://www.btselem.org/about_btselem

²⁶ Territoriality is defined as the 'attempt to affect, influence, or control actions, interactions, or access by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographic area' (Sacks, 1983)

The women of Machsom Watch at the checkpoints, cited to be the symbol of territoriality, boundaries, power and collective punishment make an interesting case study to explore their activities and roles. It is at these checkpoints that this study attempts to explore the leading question as elucidated in the previous chapter: *'where are the women'*.

Research Question

To explore the 'curiosity' of 'where are the women', we use the following sub-questions:

- i. Who are the women of Machsom Watch?
- ii. What are their activities in Machsom Watch?
- iii. How can their activities be analyzed through a gender lens?
- iv. Where do their roles fit in R2P?

Methodology

This study takes on a qualitative approach of inquiry using open ended, semi structured interviews to solicit stories, oral histories and testimonies as primary data. A qualitative approach is best suited for this study as it allows one to find out 'what people do, know, think and feel by observing, interviewing and analyzing documents' in order to 'understand and capture the point of view of others' (Patton cited in Butina, 2015).

The kinds of approaches for qualitative studies are vast, varied, and interdisciplinary. The kinds of frequently used qualitative inquiry approaches are narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Cresswell, 2007). This study uses narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquirers study 'the individual's experience in the world, an experience that was storied both in the living and telling and that could be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, writing and interpreting texts' (Clandinin, 2006). Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research in which the stories themselves become the raw data (Butina, 2015). This approach is therefore best suited for this study as we attempt to investigate the roles of the women in Machsom Watch through their activities. The study falls into the theoretical perspectives of Feminist theory, more specifically Feminist Security Studies which investigates the invisibility of women as discussed in Chapter 2.

Data Collection

For this study I was accepted to Tel Aviv University, Israel as a visiting researcher under the Erasmus International Credit Mobility+ Program. Being in Israel gave me firsthand access to interview participants and conduct participant observation.

After initially reaching out to the organization through their website, I got in touch with my first respondent through email correspondence. We scheduled the first interview in a coffee shop Tel Aviv. I then used snowball sampling after the first interview to meet more women from Machsom Watch. I had face to face interviews with three participants, one on the telephone and went on field visits with five participants.

Interviews were conducted over a span of two months in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes. The interview questions were open ended and semi structured. The interviews were supported with an interview guide prepared ahead. The interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed manually. I went on five field trips to agricultural gates, checkpoints and areas in the West Bank. This facilitated participant observation. Field notes were noted and transcribed manually. The reports written and published in their website by the women after their shifts were used to verify data, for example the names of checkpoints, agricultural gates and areas we visited.

Data Analysis

The study uses a narrative thematic process of data analysis which includes four stages: organization and preparation of the data (transcribing), obtaining a general sense of the information, identifying recurring words, ideas or patterns, giving them a code, categorizing into themes and interpretation (Butina, 2015).

In analyzing the data, recurrent ideas and words were highlighted and coded manually. After the first transcription, a master list of codes was created and more codes were added as the further analysis of transcriptions continued. In total there were fifteen codes with subcodes for some. For example, the code Occupation had further ten subcodes of checkpoints, settlements, agricultural gates, permits etc. The codes were arranged into themes that were relevant to answer the research questions. For example, the code 'personal motivation' fit into the theme of 'about' which was relevant to explain the first research question of 'who are the women'? Similarly, activities observed and conversations during participant observation were grouped into themes of 'monitoring checkpoints', 'monitoring permit offices', '*monitoring and documenting from the Occupied Territories*', '*navigating the bureaucratic permit system*' and '*outreach*' to address the question of 'what are their activities?' These themes are used to present findings.

Limitations/Issues with Data Collection

This study is by no means a complete overview of the many activities of Machsom Watch. The study uses the data from the four interviews and five field observations. More interviews with more women could not be conducted due to time limitations. 'Sampling to the point of redundancy is' suggested for qualitative studies (Butina, 2015). However, this was not possible for this study. The study therefore offers a general overview Machsom Watch. A more detailed study could be undertaken with a larger sample size. The study also does not include Gaza as the activities of Machsom Watch only operate in the West Bank. On the other hand, it must be mentioned that time for field work in Israel was cut short due to the outbreak of violence between Hamas and Israel in May 2021. This caused a significant delay in the processing of visa applications at the Israeli Embassy in Prague. My time on the field for data collection was again reduced due to quarantine obligations after arrival in Tel Aviv.

Impact of Covid

This study would be incomplete without the mention of COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic. The lockdowns during the pandemic curtailed the movement of the participants. Their shifts at the checkpoints, agricultural gates and permit offices were significantly reduced. Lockdowns at different times in Israel and in the Palestinian territory in 2020 reduced the number of shifts and hence, documentation and reporting from the West Bank. The women, however, spoke to their contacts through the phone and held online meetings to update each other. During my visit in June and July 2021, all of the participants of this study were fully vaccinated, and I had had the first dose of the vaccination. The women had resumed their shifts and duties at the checkpoints, agricultural gates and permit offices. We maintained caution with masks and social distancing at the checkpoints regardless because of dangers posed by the new delta variant.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter the results from the field work are presented and examined in detail viz a vis the research questions outlined in Chapter 3. They are: 1. Who are the women of Machsom Watch? 2. What do they do? This chapter will lead to further discussions on the primary research question of “where are the women?” within the framework of R2P and WPS.

Who are they?

The question of who the women are was put forward directly and in the beginning of the interview. All interviews started with the basic question: tell me about yourself. The women of Machsom Watch and the participants of this study are elderly Israeli Jewish women between the ages of 75 and 86. Machsom Watch is a grassroots volunteer women’s organization. There is no hierarchy nor a chain of command in the organization nor an office. They do retain a lawyer and an accountant. Major decision take place in a secretariat meeting by a simple majority vote of regulars. A general assembly is held every three months.

Many of the Machsom Women have served in the army during their younger years as is required by mandatory conscription laws in Israel. Those who did not serve was because they migrated to Israel at an older age (23-24) which is more than the regular age of conscription. They have had varied careers and professions, and after retirement joined Machsom Watch as volunteers driven by the inhumane situations at the checkpoints. The participants of this study identify on the political left-wing spectrum, some more than others.

Currently, Machsom Watch has four groups: North, Central, South and Jerusalem classified geographically (Interview, 14th June 2021). The women visit areas and checkpoints in the West Bank which is within the vicinity of their residence. The women perform different activities, acting on tips and information they receive from their contacts in the Occupied Palestinian territories. On one field trip we went to a site in a Palestinian town where the participants of the study had heard of a school that was demolished (Field notes, 11th July, 2021). They are free to pursue their interests or hunches as long as it fits into the wider agenda of the organization (Interview, 21st July). Some observe at agricultural checkpoints while others help navigate the permit system as we will see below.

The role of women as mothers is recurrent in peace, conflict and security discourse. Many women’s peace movements have emerged from their roles as mothers protecting their sons or their communities. ‘Four Mothers’, a protest movement against the Israeli-Lebanon War of 1982, is such a case of motherhood being mobilized and politicized to protest against wars (Helman, 1999; Lemish & Barzel, 2000).

On inquiring about their roles as mothers (or grandmothers) as motivation for the work that they do, Participant A replied, “*It was very political. There was a political motivation when Machsom Watch started to protest and protect the Palestinians.*” (Interview, 13th June 2021).

Another respondent to the interview recalled being motivated by a human concern of seeing what went on at the checkpoints:

“I had no idea. I didn't know about the checkpoints. I had never heard about them. I didn't know that people can't move freely. Then I found out that the next checkpoint is in walking distance. I didn't live here. I lived somewhere else, but this was still in walking distance, down the road. Bethlehem is down the road.

I had no idea.

And we stood there and the shock was...

No, I don't have any words.

And I asked myself, 'how is it that this happening more or less at the entrance to my house? Not exactly but more or less. And I went to visit friends here and it never occurred to me that three minutes later there was this horrible, horrible checkpoints. There was more than one.' (Interview, 7th July 2021)

Portrayals of peaceful mothers do not fit into the narratives of Machsom Watch women. They are activists with political and human concerns. The Machsom Women who were interviewed, started their work in peace activism at the end of their varied professional careers when personal family life or professional ethics were no longer hurdles to their political opinions. One participant mentioned that conflicting stances in the family, political (right wing and left wing) and professional (army and civilian) stopped her from becoming more vocal about her own beliefs earlier, but now that she is older and retired, she is free to do as she wants (Interview, 7th July 2021). Another participant mentioned that in spite of different views in the family, they co-exist (Interview, 29th June 2021). Another participant mentioned 'a wall' between her and her children as they did not approve of what she was doing in Machsom Watch (Interview, 13th June 2021). Despite diverse backgrounds and personal histories, what unites the women of Machsom Watch is their obligation as Israeli Jews to protest the Israeli Occupation of Palestine within their own capacity. Other respondent mentioned their obligations as an Israeli Jew to "*do what little I can*" (Interview, 25th July 2021).

What do they do?

Participants from this study visited agricultural checkpoints, army checkpoints between Israel and Palestine and in the West Bank, visited Palestinian families, provided assistance with permits and lectured at pre-military academies. These activities are not a complete portrayal of the various activities that they are involved in. They are also involved in monitoring at military courts and villages deeper in the West Bank where I was unable to visit due to time limitations. The participants of this study went to their checkpoints every week or once in two weeks. However, no matter what activities they are involved in and how many shifts, at the end of every shift, they write a detailed report which they post on the Machsom Watch website. The website is accessible to the public.

From the data conducted from this study's field work, activities of MachsomWatch women can be categorized into following themes:

Monitoring checkpoints

Checkpoints serve primarily to restrict and limit movement. Participant A describes it as the '*shop windows of the Occupation*' (Interview, 13th June, 2021). The women of Machsom Watch first started their shifts at the checkpoints in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2001. At the time i.e. during the Second Intifada, the checkpoints were terribly managed and were everywhere in the West Bank. The checkpoints were in between Israel and Palestine and also in between Palestinian villages, severely curtailing movement of Palestinians within their open territory. The conditions of Palestinians trying to pass through were horrifying. Participant H describes it as "*hell*" (Interview, 7th July 2021).

Soldiers on duty had the power to let Palestinians pass or to detain them at will. Machsom Watch women go to the checkpoints, observe what happens there, take photographs, document the conduct of soldiers and intervene on behalf of the Palestinians if required. One participant describes how she mediated between an Israeli soldier and a detained Palestinian man: "*I've had experiences dealing with these officers in my army service which was also then a few years back, at the time. And I was successful. I managed to free the man.*" (Interview, 25th July 2021)

Some women call known associates in the military who are in a position to resolve situation or make a decision at the checkpoint. A participant of the study recalled a case where a young Palestinian woman had an appointment at a foreign embassy (Interview, 15th July 2021). For some reason, she was detained at the checkpoint and was visibly panicked being unable to reach the embassy on time for her appointment. Participant H called the embassy on her behalf, explaining the situation and additionally giving her a note with her phone number in case there was a problem. She did not receive a call suggesting that everything went well. Machsom Watch women intervene when there is a clear case of arbitrary detention, mistreatment, refused entry, humanitarian cases or problems with the permit. After several years monitoring at the checkpoints, Participant H also notes the uncertainty of such interventions. Sometimes they work in favor of the needy and sometimes it backfires (Interview, 15th July 2021).

A few participants of this study visited agricultural gates. The agricultural gates are different from the military checkpoints but serve the same purpose of controlling and regulating movement. These gates separate Palestinian landowners from their land that is trapped in between the separation barrier and the green line. This area is called the ‘seam zone’ and are enclaves of Palestinian land or homes caught in between the barrier wall on the east and the Green Line in the west²⁷. The seam zone is controlled by the Israeli through a strict permit system which restricts Palestinian access to their own land (UN, 2012) The agricultural gates which give landowners access to their lands in the seam zone, are opened by the military three times a day only to allow people with permits to pass through (Interview, 14th June 2021). Palestinian landowners must apply for a permit, to cultivate their land in the seam zone area.

Getting a hold of these permits are problematic and heavily entrenched in bureaucracy (discussed in next section). Apart from the permit system, the agricultural gates make it difficult for farmers to cultivate their land (Interview, 14th June 2021). There are no fixed hours in agricultural work. Work and labor required depends on the sowing season, irrigation needs, harvesting and so on. Participant B discussed of the opening and closing of the agricultural gates and the difficulties faced by the farmers.

“...the army promised that they would be able to reach their agricultural land and cultivate it. But it doesnt really work because if you know anything about farming, sometimes you want to go to your field for half an hour in the morning just to open the water and sometimes you need 3 hours there and sometimes you need 8 hours there. Sometimes you can do something by yourself, sometimes you need ten people to work with you for two days. And this doesnt work here because the checkpoints opens twice or thrice a day and so people have no irrigation. They cant spend the whole day waiting for the checkpoints to open to use the water for half an hour. Or they are stuck for the whole day, and they have other things to do (Interview, 14th June 2021)

After the shift, the women write detailed reports, and publish it on their website. Stories and pictures of these checkpoints are abundant on the Machsom Watch website. The reports from the agricultural gates document opening and closing times, violations at the gates and the problems that Palestinians face with regard to the gates²⁸. The issue of free movement for these farmers to cultivate their lands how and when they want is a major issue of the agricultural gates which provide access to seam zones.

²⁷ The Barrier Wall annexed Palestinian lands as it was not built on the Green Line or pre-1967 borders. These created ‘seam zones’ where residents and land owners need permits to live or cultivate. People living in this seam zone area are called ‘internally Stuck Persons.’ See CJPME. 2008. *The “Seam Zone” – Israeli Land Grab*. . CJPME Factsheet 40. https://www.cjpme.org/fs_040 ; Hamoked. 2013. *The Permit Regime: Human Rights Violations in the West Bank Areas Known as the Seam Zone*. <http://www.hamoked.org/Case.aspx?CID=Cases0099>

²⁸ Al Qadi, Nasser. 2018. *The Israeli Permit Regime: Realities and Challenges* – The Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem. <http://poica.org/2017/12/the-israeli-permit-regime-realities-and-challenges/> (July 21, 2021).

There are reports from the earlier years highlighting the plight of Palestinians trying to pass through, the long lines, the pushing and shoving to get ahead, arbitrary detentions and so on. Recently there are reports on infringement of rights or land, mistreatments, stories of Palestinians they met, little victories through their interventions and even uneventful days. There are also some reports of positive news from the checkpoints, but “rarely” says Participant F (Field notes, 5th July 202).

Participants mention ‘small victories’ that they achieved through the years. Earlier the checkpoints opened around 5am and by the time it took for a Palestinian to pass through, he/she would lose three hours of working time (Interview, 13th July 2021) Machsom Watch women had a ‘major fight’ and managed to get the checkpoints to open early at 4 am (Interview, 7th July 2021)

“So we achieved that they open the checkpoint at 4 o clock. and not 5 o clock. So that was our great victory, which really helped many Palestinians not to lose their job. Because if there's tremendous pressure at the checkpint and youu wait there for three hours then u may be late and the employer just leaves and you lost your job” (ibid).

In recent years, there has been an upgrade in the infrastructure of the military checkpoints and some checkpoints have been disbanded all together (Friedman, 2021). Some checkpoints are operated by privatize security firms (Field Notes, 16th June 2021). For example, Qalandiya checkpoint, which was once notorious for its long lines and mismanagement now has an automated computerized system. Palestinians pass through by scanning their biometric permits on the automated gates. Though this had made the crossings easier for thousands of Palestinians who cross into Israel for work, the upgrades have institutionalized control of movement with a more formal and bureaucratic permit regime (AFSC, 2013). Nevertheless, Participant A insists that, “As long as there are checkpoints, there has to be checkpoint watch.” (Interview, 13th June 2013)

The reports are read by the Israeli Army regularly (Interview, 13th June 2021). Machsom Women know this because use often the Army has reacted to these reports in meetings with army personnel (Interview, 7th July, 2021). Some women of Machsom Watch are invited to such meetings where the army personnel express humanitarian concerns or in a bid to ‘cover their backs’ (Interview, 25th July 2021). Participant A also mentions that the soldiers’ treatment of Palestinians has improved over the years of their presence at the checkpoints (Interview, 13th July 2021)

Monitoring and documenting from the Occupied Territories

In recent years after the removal or upgrade of the checkpoints, reports tell stories of settler violence, new construction work, demolitions, incidents at the permit office etc. These changes reflect a change in the working agendas of Machsom Watch. They also reflect adaptability and flexibility in their agenda. Reports on the Machsom Watch websites document changes, construction and reporting from areas in the West Bank. Since a part of this study includes participant observation I went to the West Bank with some participants of the study. We drove around in a car, zipping in and out of Areas A, B and C²⁹ within the West Bank. The women often stopped to take pictures of new construction work, demolitions, open or closed checkpoint. The women report these incidents and observations along with photographs.

In one field visit, Participant C noted and photographed expansion of Israeli settlement cowsheds. In her report she mentions that these illegal extensions take place regardless of documents that prove that the land belongs to a Palestinian (Field Notes, 21st June 2021).

²⁹ The Oslo Accords, 1993 divided the authority and responsibility in the West Bank into Areas A, B and C. See *The Oslo Accords and the ‘Double Headed’ Bureaucracy* in Berda, Yael. 2020. “The ‘Permit Regime’: Bureaucracy as a Weapon - Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.” <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/42798/the-permit-regime-bureaucracy-as-a-weapon?cHash=8893ee48b95aa128d27f13bf1563b51e>

Another report of a field visit, Participant F reports about the extensive construction work in the roads and territories (Field Notes, 5th July 2021). On another field visit we saw a village closed off by military personnel with their weapons drawn. On further inquiry, it was revealed that the previous night an Israeli woman had been injured by children throwing stones. As a result, the entire village was being ‘punished’ (Field notes, 16th June 2021).

In one of these visits to the South Hebron Hills, we visited a Palestinian family. The head of the family complained about settlers repeatedly encroaching on his grazing land and ignoring Israeli Supreme Court orders (Field Notes, 21st June 2021) On another visit to a Palestinian family in the West Bank, the father required new medical treatment for an injury caused by the Israeli Defense Forces many years ago (Field Notes, 29th June 2021). On another visit to the West Bank, we stopped at a pharmacy where the Palestinian pharmacist spoke of the troubles of daily life under Israeli occupation (Field notes, 11th July 2021). Visiting Palestinian families and talking to Palestinians provide a brief glimpse of life under Israeli Occupation Some Machsom Watch women also provide material aid to disadvantaged Palestinians in the West Bank. This humanitarian aspect varies among women, some more involved than others.

On another field visit, we visit a Palestinian enclave that was a UN camp. The women had heard reports from their contacts there that a school had been demolished. They photographed the rubble left after the demolition and posted it on their website (Field Notes, 11th July 2021). Machsom Watch women are often informed by their friends or contacts in the West Bank about abnormal episodes and incidents. Acting on this information they arrive at the scene to observe what happened and document it all.

Navigating the bureaucratic permit system

As checkpoints were removed or were computerized, the movement of Palestinians are subject to a complex permit regime³⁰. This permit regime removes pressure from the checkpoints and transfers it to a bureaucratic military permit system³¹. The Israeli military cites security reasons i.e. to prevent armed attacks, for the permit system. But this framing is challenged by some who call it a mechanism of control and segregation (Konrad, 2019; Interview 15th July) The system is controlled by the Israeli Civil Administration. This government body carries out bureaucratic functions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. A District Coordination and Liaison (DCL) Office under the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) along with the General Security Service (GSS) is responsible for issuing permits to applicants (Keshet, 2006)

In 2012 there were 101 types of permits ‘governing’ Palestinian movement, within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Israel, West Bank and other parts of the oPt (including seam zone areas) or beyond its internationally recognized borders (UN, 2012). Permits are regulated for Palestinian Populations in the West Bank and Gaza by a system of authorizations depending on health needs, legal needs, education needs, economy and employment, religious worship, exceptional needs etc. The list is long and complex³². The permit is either granted, rejected or postponed depending on the validity of documents, background security checks and other paperwork. The applicant is not given any specific

³⁰ See Al Qadi, Nasser. 2018. *The Israeli Permit Regime: Realities and Challenges* – The Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem. <http://poica.org/2017/12/the-israeli-permit-regime-realities-and-challenges/> (July 21, 2021). Landau, Idan. 2013. “A Journey into the Dark Heart of Israel’s Permit Regime.” *+972 Magazine*. <https://www.972mag.com/a-journey-into-the-dark-heart-of-israels-permit-regime/>;

³¹ Berda, Yael. 2020. “The ‘Permit Regime’: Bureaucracy as a Weapon - Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.” <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/42798/the-permit-regime-bureaucracy-as-a-weapon?chHash=8893ee48b95aa128d27f13bf1563b51e>

³² Coordination of Government Activities in the and Territories: Operations and Palestinian Affairs Department. 2020. *Unclassified Status of Authorizations for Entry of Palestinians into Israel, for Their Passage from Judea and Samaria into the Gaza Strip, and for Their Departure Abroad*.

reason or explanation if his application is rejected except for ‘security’ or insufficient proof of ‘connection to the land’ (UN, 2012)

We arrived to a closed DCL Office during one field trip (Field Notes, 5th July). The office was closed with no explanations. A few Palestinians waited outside, confused but hopeful when they saw Machsom Watch us arrive. The women made phone calls to contacts in other human rights organizations and to other Machsom Watch women who know higher ranking Israeli army personnel. They sought an explanation and further directions for the Palestinians awaiting their appointments. One of them was an elderly Palestinian-Christian man who wanted a permit to visit a church in East Jerusalem. Another wanted a permit for his wife as she was in her last week of pregnancy and needed to go to the hospital. They had all their supporting documents for the permit application. The calls were futile, and no explanation was given for why the office was closed. Machsom Watch women gave phone numbers of lawyers, legal service providers and other human rights organizations who could help the Palestinians but, on that day, there was nothing much they could do. On another field trip, we met a Palestinian man who was desperate to get a work permit but unable to get one because he was unmarried and did not know that the rules and regulations had changed, and now unmarried men were eligible to apply. The women gave him the contact numbers of another Machsom Watch woman who could help him (Field Notes, 5th July 2021). Participant E recalls how she managed to get an emergency permit for a person dying from lung cancer after pleading to higher ranking army officers on his behalf. (Interview, 7th July, 2021). The women have helped thousands of Palestinians pass through the checkpoints on humanitarian or medical concerns (Interview, 7th July, 2021)

Procuring a permit is tiresome especially if no reason is given for rejection. The women of Machsom Watch help Palestinians navigate this complex system. Either by pleading to higher ranking officials for humanitarian cases or through legal measures, the women help Palestinians get permits or revoke ‘blacklisted³³’ people. The women distribute contact information of lawyers and other institutions to people in the DCL Offices who need help with permits. Additionally, by publishing reports on the mismanagement and mistreatment at these offices, Machsom Watch women document and monitor the oppressive and controlling administrative procedures that Palestinians face.

Participant E spent many years learning and understanding the rules and regulation of the permit system. What goes on in at the checkpoints and DCL Office are only the tip of the larger menacing bureaucratic iceberg, she says (Interview, 7th July 2021). Machsom Watch women help Palestinians navigate this system, which is the *true occupation* (ibid).

“And it took me 15 years to learn this. I asked myself, ‘What's wrong? Why is this man not getting a permit to work his land?’

And there are plenty of other reasons too. I found out slowly that people are prevented by the security and by the police and by the civil authority. He hasn't done anything but maybe he will do something. This because he has the same name as somebody, certainly. And they live in the same village.

Its not that twenty and not married...there's hundereds of them.

It's a very complicated system. Who can employ you? And what are the conditions and what kind of papers do you have to present in order to get the permit? It is a whole science. I spent several years just to understand.” (Interview, 7th July 2021)

³³ Palestinians on the black list are considered security threats. No reasons are given for the rejection, and restrictions are usually instituted without prior warning. See OCHR. 2016. *Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General*. UN General Assembly
https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/PS/SG_Report_FoM_Feb2016.pdf.

Outreach

Participants of this study were also involved in giving lectures in Israeli pre-military academies. These academies known as *'mechinot'* is a program for young people before they join the military. Its aims are to prepare them for a meaningful service in the army³⁴. Often these young people who go to these academies are idealistic and motivated to serve the country. Participant A goes with the intention to talk about a different point of view, one that they might not have heard of.

"I tell them this thing about democracy because they all look in the internet and they see everything in the left wing as undermining democracy and Israel and being non patriotic. So I explain to them that what I'm doing is unbelievable patriotic. They tell you ... theres a typical question...why you hang your dirty washing. And I tell them the problem is the dirty washing not the showing it abroad. There shouldnt be any dirty washing. Then it doesnt matter. so we should focus on the dirty washing and not on the fact that we are showing it outside because the dirty washing should disappear." (Interview, 13th June 2021)

She also mentions that her position as patriotic Jewish woman legitimizes her critique of the government and removes preconceived anti-Semitic biases (idib). Another participant who also lectures at *mechinots* presents a different outlook than the previous participant. Participant E talk about narratives:

"I talk about the facts of life. This is how you live. And I do talk about narratives. I'm interested in narratives. Because you tell a different narrative and Palestinians tell a different narrative. And everyone is trying to make the narrative the one: My narrative is the right narrative and their narrative is the wrong one. And they have no justification for their narrative. My narrative is justified. And we tell what we like our children to learn. I learnt in school. I was born here... that my parents came into an empty country with no people in it, well this is a lie the size of the universe. Ofcourse there were people here and ofcourse it wasnt empty. But we never heard about it. The people without a land, came to a land without people. this is what I learnt in school. These are the narratives. We never talk about what we have done. When we publish terrorist activities, we only publish our victims. We never talk about...every night we kill someone we never talk about it. It is never mentioned. It is a vvery one sided story" (Interview, 7th July 2021).

Machsom Watch also offers educational tours to Israelis, tourists, diplomats and journalists. On these tours, they are taken to various checkpoints in the West Bank to show them the realities of the Occupation that they might never have heard of. The women write to the media or to members of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament or to head of army personnel responsible for the checkpoints and agricultural gates. Most importantly, the daily reports of from the checkpoints, agricultural gates, the DCL Office and life under the Occupation is crucial in informing the public about ground realities.

What are their roles?

Mediators

Either at the checkpoints, the DCL Offices or at the women of Machsom Watch are mediators between the Palestinians and Israeli Occupation. There are countless stories of the women pleading and negotiating with the soldiers at the checkpoints on behalf of a Palestinian. Some women make calls to higher ranking officers asking for emergency medical permits. Some women help navigate the bureaucratic hurdles of the permit system. Sometimes they intervene on behalf of the Palestinians at the checkpoints. In this way they are mediators and facilitators between the occupying forced and an occupied people.

³⁴ See <https://mechinot.org.il/en-us/the-mechinot/about-2-3-2/the-mechina-experience-245>

Knowers

Machsom Watch women work on the field every day. Through their activities at the checkpoints and in the occupied territories, they observe first-hand atrocities and human rights infringements committed. Through their contact in the occupied territories they are often the first to know about demolitions, closures, shootings, curfews and other such incidents. In the West Bank, these incidents are common and regular. The meticulous detailed reports are archives of the daily life under Occupation.

Witnesses

As they go about their shifts, reporting and taking photographs, the women of Machsom Watch are also witnesses of the Occupation. Being on the ground every day, they have seen Palestinians being humiliated, harassed, oppressed. Keshet (2016) describes the reports as ‘testimonies from the field’ which are crucial for documenting oppression and in the formation of collective memory.

Activists

Being present at the checkpoint in itself is an act of resistance against the Occupation. Machsom Watch women by negotiating or pleading for Palestinians demonstrate to the Palestinians another face of Israelis that are not settlers or soldiers (Interview, 21st June 2021). Their interventions help individuals circumvent physical and administrative barriers. As activists they have had a few but meaningful victories such as opening of the checkpoint early, spreading awareness of the checkpoints and to an extent reining in soldier’s violence at the checkpoint (Interview, 14th June 2021; 5th July, 2021). This places them as ‘agents of change’.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusions

A Gender Analysis

Feminist Security Studies emphasizes the need to look at the researcher's own position while conducting research. On field trips to the West Bank, we were able to pass through these checkpoints easily without being stopped for identification. Our Israeli number plate and appearances of Israeli elderly women (and one young female) allowed us to pass through the checkpoint without another look by the security guards. This privilege is exclusive to Israeli citizens, and severely regulated for Palestinians, as discussed in the previous chapter. Speaking the language Hebrew is another added value of the women in Machsom Watch, as the soldiers or guards react in lesser hostile ways than to someone speaking in Arabic. The bodies of elderly Machsom Watch women deem them to be non-threats to security. At the checkpoints or at the DCL Offices, they are seen sometimes as a nuisance but not a threat to security. Often, they are shooed away and told to leave as they are older women and don't "*understand security*" (Interview, 13th June, 2021)

A feminist critique of R2P asks 'where are the women' and 'what work is gender doing' (Charlesworth 2010; Stamnes, 2012). By exploring the women, activities and roles of Machsom Watch we have addressed the first question of 'where are the women' to reveal the omission of this group of women and their activities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The role and activities of Machsom Watch brings several gender analyses to the fore. Military and security are considered the realm of men. Even though the Israeli army conscripts both men and women, some studies have shown women's experiences as that of conforming to masculine roles and ideology (Levin, 2010; Sasson Levy, 2003; Golan, 1997). Using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, in a study of gender practices in the Israeli army, Sasson Levy (2003) contends that "*when women mimic combat soldiers, they adhere to a perception that identifies soldier hood exclusively with masculinity and thereby strengthens, rather than challenges the military gender order.*" The military mostly remains a masculine arena.

During their shifts at the checkpoints, the women are perceived as '*old women who do not understand security, who have come to harass and interfere with their work*' (Interview, 13th June 2021). In Israel, access to political institutions and therefore protest through political institutions are closed to women (Lemish & Barzel, 2000). Thus women resort to grassroots movements to resist against the militaristic policy of the government. In militarized societies, where masculinity is made to seem 'natural', security is deeply gendered where men hold most political influence and women's voices and influence are silenced (Enloe, 2004). The women of Machsom Watch are unwelcome and uninvited (Interview, 13th June, 2021). In the militarized checkpoints and within the West Bank, the armed Israeli soldiers assert masculinity juxtaposed against the older civilian Machsom Watch women who are fighting for Palestinian human rights. This reinforces a gender hierarchy where masculinity is celebrated, and femininity is silenced. It demonstrates 'how gender works.' In this regard, the role of Machsom Watch women can be viewed as female resistance to the masculine realm of the military.

Machsom Watch also reflects a shift from private spaces to public spaces. Many participants of the study mentioned personal, family or professional issues earlier in their lives, that held them back from being publicly vocal about their political views. One participant recalled that conflicting stances in the family, political (right wing and left wing) and professional (army and civilian) stopped her from becoming more vocal about her own beliefs earlier. Another participant mentioned conflict in professional values as a journalist (Interview, 15th July, 2021) But now that she is older, retired and the children are grown she is free to do as she wants (Interview, 7th July 2021).

Links to Responsibility to Protect and Women Peace Security Agenda

The year 2020 marked twenty years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and fifteen years since the adoption of R2P. The WPS Agenda aims to empower women in matters of peace and security. It refers to women in conflict, in need of protection, while also allowing them to participate in prevention and rebuilding activities. It catapulted women into the peace and security arena. R2P is based on the idea of protection to ensure international peace and security. Despite two decades of UN's efforts to promote women's rights since the passing of landmark USCR 1325, gender analysis, gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming remains largely missing from R2P discourse. This study aims to bring to the fore prevention aspects of R2P and participation aspects WPS with a spotlight on the role of women, particularly women in grassroots organizations.

A recent report of the Secretary General (2020) *Prioritizing Prevention and Strengthening Response: Women and the Responsibility to Protect*, recognizes gendered impacts of atrocity crimes, links prevention of such crimes to R2P, recognizes the varied roles of women in atrocity situations not only that of victims but also in prevention, as 'agents of change', mediators, peacebuilders or perpetrators and accomplices.

The Secretary General emphasizes prevention of atrocity crimes in which participation of women as local actors are "*vital in the early stages of atrocity prevention, including through monitoring and documenting violations, information sharing, facilitating legal redress and supporting survivors*" (Report of the Secretary General, 2020)

Furthermore the report encourages "*renewed engagement between the two agendas, which could help to reinforce inclusive conflict and atrocity prevention, thereby supporting the broader prevention agenda*". It states "*the implementation of the responsibility to protect will be more effective if approached in a more inclusive manner and if priority is given to meaningful participation by women and to their protection and rights at all stages*" (ibid).

Taking these aforementioned provisions of R2P and WPS, the role of Machsom Watch as a women's grassroots organization is reinforced in participating meaningfully in the prevention of conflict and its management . Machsom Watch as mediators, knowers, witnesses and activists can be meaningfully incorporated into early warning frameworks of the responsibility to prevent within R2P. This framing places women beyond victims or peacemakers but rather within their own category of informants, meditators and agents of change.

Local women and women's groups must be at the center of conflict prevention efforts because they have the analysis, knowledge and capacity to do so" (PeaceWomen, 2017).

There is gap in gender perspectives in R2P. This study attempts to contribute to this gap by analyzing the gendered role of the women of Machsom Watch against the militarized masculinity of the Israeli state. The study places women as capable actors in early warning frameworks of R2P. This positioning also transcends viewing women as victims of sexual violence in conflict environments or as peacemakers or peacekeepers. These varied roles of women must be further investigated and analyzed to offer a gender perspective into R2P. . Investigations into these role s bring women to the fore as active and meaningful participants. Adding a gender lens to these roles offer a more completely understanding of matters of peace, conflict and security. They are the answers to the looming feminist security question of 'where are the women?'

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