

Book Review

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**Review of Duncanson, C. (2016).
Gender and Peace building.
Cambridge: Polity Press. 157 pages
and preliminaries**

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Introduction

The book is written to encourage the inclusion of gender in the peacebuilding process because of the peculiar experience of women in war. The book comprises five (5) chapters and its central argument is the understanding of the relationship between gender and peace building and the involvement of gender in the process because women and men experience war differently. Also, it aims to understand feminist position on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and to set the agenda for involvement of gender in peace building because of the increasing nature of sexual violence against women in war. The writer pointed out that in peace building processes gender analyses is often neglected, as such there is the need to include gender analyses in peace building. The neglect of gendered analyses led to the adoption of resolution 1325 of the UN in 2000, as well as the introduction of UNSCR 1820 in 2008 aimed at ensuring the inclusion of women in peace building processes.

Engaging women in peace building process brings a balance to achieving peace and the return of peace to war torn societies. Duncanson provided the steps to be followed in order include gender in peace building as: gender equality as a goal; gender as an analytical tool for assessing peacebuilding; and gender as an approach to peacebuilding. The author stated “feminist scholarships in many decades have demonstrated war is gendered with its causes and consequences. This is seen in the language and policies of state leaders through their strategies and tactics in conflict zones” (Duncanson, 2016, p. 1). The author pointed out that feminist scholars have shown how conflict affects men and women differently and, as such, they should all be included in peace building processes. The efforts of inclusion of gender in peace building has been successful to a large extent even though, more work needs to be done. More women’s voices and views on peace and security matters, for example, is being heard worldwide (Anderlini,2007;

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Cock-burn 2007; Reilly 2007; Cohn, 2008; Bonkat & Buba, 2019) and more women have become empowered economically (Bonkat, 2015). This book is suitable for persons involved in peace processes, especially government officials, International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Military Organizations and Scholars, amongst others.

The book starts by looking at gender blindness and gender dilemmas in peace building. The author shows how peace operations did not consider gender since the post-cold war up to the 1990s, even when women were the most affected during war. The impacts of war on women, according to the author, were not taken seriously by the UN Security Council. Also, women, in spite of their work, were not recognized as potential peacemakers, as shown by the failure to include women in the processes of post conflict reconstruction and rebuilding. However, with the introduction of resolution 1325 in 2000 this problem changed and a new era of peace building was introduced by involving women in conflict resolution and peace building. "The resolution 1325 moved peace building from gender blindness to a set of implementation gaps" (Duncanson, 2016, p. 420), and gave rise to the creation of other gender policies. These policies are a Gender Resource Package for Peace-keeping Operations in 2004, a Global Action Plan in 2006, and in 2008, the United Nations Security Council Resolution was adopted because of some challenges faced in its total implementation, such as matters of sexual violence issues in conflict. UN resolutions were, however, criticized as imperialist because they served the interest of the west. This critique does not hold water because African societies before colonial rule and introduction of foreign religions recognized the role of women as peace agents, as such, resolutions seeking gender sensitivity in peace building processes cannot be said to be imperialistic.

The second chapter focuses on the historical development of the WPS architecture, the different perspectives and assessment of how feminists envision peace in relation to gender equality. It highlights gender as an analytical tool which brings to the fore, the experiences of men and women during conflict and peace. The author paid attention to how gender structures existed in war and peacebuilding. The idea of the author is not

about treating women equally but eradicating gendered hierarchies; by involving women on peace tables and increasing the role of the female gender in decision making at all levels. Duncanson also discussed how neoliberal policies tended not to make women integral in peace building rather; it sees women's activism in peace to lie in the social construction of gender. Their gender should not be an obstacle, instead, the feminist standpoint are of the opinion that women from all races, cultures, and locations should be involved in peace processes, because they are naturally peaceful (Duncanson, 2016).

The third chapter of the book examines neoliberal prescriptions for conflict reconstruction which goes hand in hand with peacebuilding. Gender was used as an analytical tool to understand the relationship of peace building and gender, and how conflict affects both men and women and how they are involved in the peacebuilding process. The author showed how neoliberal policies affects women and other marginalized groups negatively in post-conflict context. These policies are hostile to women who are desperate to cope and survive, because they offer incentives to mostly male agents. Strategies women used to cope in a conflict economy is not catered for by neoliberal policies, rather they further entrench gender inequality and women's hardship in the aftermath of war. Mozambique, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan are among countries who in the aftermath of war, have implemented neoliberal policies by borrowing from IMF and World Bank, and have ended up depending on foreign aid and investment. In summary, the author argued that the liberalization process has benefitted elites, exacerbated corruption and has been harmful to majority of the citizens in conflict zones, which has been particularly damaging to women and other marginalized groups in the coping economy.

The second to the last chapter of the book focuses on efforts that have been put in place to overcome the problems; dilemmas; and obstacles of including gender in peace building. The author pointed out that involving women can be achieved by recognizing gender inequality and gender ideology in war. It involves transforming the unequal relations between men and women. It went ahead to discuss intersectionality as a situation

where unequal relations between different races, classes, and sex are transformed. Another focus of the chapter is on WPS architecture and how it has engendered peacebuilding using protection, participation and prevention as well as gendering security sector reforms (SSR) in the WPS agenda. Case studies of DRC, Syria and Burundi were used to understand the reduced gaps between men and women in peace building processes. This can be done by protecting women in war which most states and UN are not able to protect and prosecute those who sexually harassed them. The author further showed how sexual abuse/violence is neglected in peace negotiations and as such there is a need to develop guidelines to address this situation. Ensuring women's participation in peace processes through the UN WPS architecture are efforts to include women in the processes. "Peace processes are crucial for women as this is where agreements are forged which will shape the future of a country" (Duncanson, 2016, p. 105). The author pointed out that despite the adoption of UN resolution 1325, a survey by UN Women of 31 major peace processes around the world between 1992 and 2010 showed that, only 9% of women were included in the process and 4% were signatories. To overcome these challenges, it was concluded that to achieve these three pillars the issue of resources is central.

The last chapter of the book suggests gendering alternatives to Neoliberal peacebuilding. It focused on what is required to capitalize on the gains and to overcome obstacles in realizing peace and advocates for a new approach to peace building which places women's economic empowerment at its centre. The author demonstrated that peace means having economic security and opportunities, not just the absence of war. The UN is seen to have increasingly recognized the need to focus more on the economic empowerment of women as part of peacebuilding. Through the UNSCR 1889 adopted in 2009 and 2010, the body supports women's socio-economic rights in post-conflict settings, and PAP introduced in 2010 committed to including women in economic recovery. UNSCR 2122, also adopted in 2013, increased measures to protect and ensure more participation of women, gender equality and women's empowerment to be central to international

peace and security. As such the author calls for a new approach, called Social Services Justice (SSJ). This new approach serves as a bridge that recognizes both the immediate needs and long-term development, by dismantling hyper-masculinities and opening spaces for men and women in post-conflict environment. The economic empowerment of women and other marginalized groups as well as the focus of justice for women in post-conflict environments are important for development and security, particularly for women and gendered inequalities which could lead to transformation of the global economic system.

The book concludes that, after fifteen (15) years of adopting UNSCR 1325 there are positive signs that UN and feminist scholarships are gaining grounds on their focus on economic empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. Small gains have been experienced in the protection and participation for gender equality especially under neoliberal policies by challenging and exacerbating poverty, inequality and injustice. Finally, governments need to engage GBIs and GIAs to challenge the imposition of neoliberal policies in their countries. One of the key arguments of this book has been the need to “pay more attention to women’s economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights in post-conflict contexts” (Duncanson, 2016, p. 154). This simply means that when women are empowered economically more of them will get involved in processes of peace building and governance in post-conflict societies.