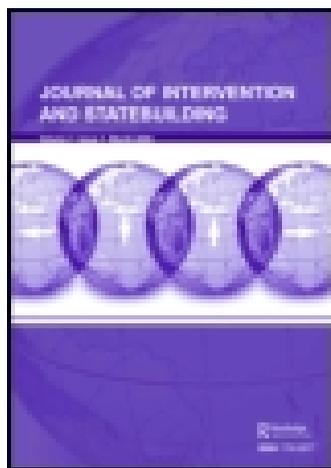


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A Feminist Approach to Hybridity: Understanding Local and International Interactions in Producing Post-Conflict Gender Security

Laura McLeod

Recently, the concept of hybridity has become popular within critical peacebuilding scholarship to explain the interplay of power between local and international actors in post-conflict contexts. However, a nuanced gender lens has often been missing from these analyses. This article develops a feminist critique and approach to hybridity in order to achieve a deeper sense of the effects that experiences and perspectives of international and local actors have upon peacebuilding initiatives. It begins to develop a feminist approach to hybridity via a case study of a gender security initiative concerned with challenging the prevalence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) abuse in domestic violence in Serbia. The article concludes by highlighting how this feminist perspective allows a richer understanding of the power relations shaping local and international interactions.

Keywords feminism; hybridity; gender security; local; international

Introduction

Local and international actors interact in various ways in the post-conflict context, and this article unpacks how these interactions have shaped configurations of 'gender security' within particular post-conflict initiatives. To explore these interactions, I offer a feminist critique of the concept of hybridity, which has been used by critical peacebuilding scholars to make sense of local and international interactions within post-conflict peace, security and development (PSD) initiatives, which are actions or procedures taken as part of a peacebuilding process. Hybridity has been described by Roger Mac Ginty as a process where different local and international actors 'coalesce and conflict to different extents on different issues to produce a fusion peace' (2010, 397). The feminist perspective of hybridity outlined in this article achieves two things. First, it contends that a feminist lens offers a textured understanding of the power relations between local and international gender-change agents developing a PSD initiative. Second, it suggests that a feminist poststructural approach opens

the way for a deeper understanding of the logics underpinning concepts simulating hybrid PSD initiatives (e.g. gender security). These theoretical arguments are illustrated through a case study of a specific initiative concerned with challenging the prevalence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Serbia. The feminist lens utilized to explore this initiative allows us to notice the contextual and conceptual history of 'gender security' produced through processes and practices of hybridity.

Taking a feminist lens to investigate hybridity is not merely a matter of 'adding women' or looking at gender-related initiatives. Rather, a feminist lens means rethinking the way in which power functions to shape the world around us. Certainly, there are a number of ideological orientations that can be adopted in relation to feminism (see Hansen 2010, 17–27, for an overview). This article begins to develop a feminist critique of hybridity, inspired by poststructural and phenomenological insights. In particular, I borrow ideas from Christine Sylvester's point that we all touch war in different ways (2011b, 1). The realization that we have different experiences, memories, conceptualizations and interpretations of a conflict across time and space highlights that war can also be experienced in a distant and mediated way, even if we do not directly live it (Sylvester 2013, 5). I suggest that these hazy and intangible experiences affect our policies. As war and post-war can be experienced in multifarious ways, local and international advocates bring diverse conceptualizations of that war based upon the windows of knowledge that they can access, and have accessed.

The notion that different people, located in different places, with different temporal connections to a war have different perceptions about a conflict may seem rather simplistic. But I suggest that it is worth paying attention to, as these contrasting conceptualizations of war shape the problematization of the post-conflict context. This is particularly important when local and international actors work together to address post-conflict problems and to develop initiatives aimed at dealing with the problems that are noticed. Contemporary critical peacebuilding scholarship has developed a concept to understand the process by which local and international actors work together: hybridity. However, hybridity is rarely conceptualized in a feminist way (by placing gender at the centre of analysis), and yet the concept echoes many elements of feminist scholarship relating to post-conflict contexts. In realizing the significance of complex relationships between multiple actors and issues, in acknowledging 'margins, silences and bottom rungs' (Enloe 1996, 186–202) and in valuing lived experiences on the ground, the concept of hybridity could almost be a mirror image of much feminist peacebuilding scholarship.¹ Thus, the aim of this article is to begin developing a feminist perspective of hybridity in order to highlight ways of linking critical peacebuilding and feminist peacebuilding scholarship. I wish to highlight two theoretical and analytical consequences that arise: (1) the development of a nuanced insight about central concepts within a hybrid initiative, and (2) a heightened perception of hidden power relations within a PSD initiative.

This article proceeds in four parts. The first part reflects upon the concept of hybridity and ways in which a feminist perspective can alter our understanding of hybridity. The second part of this article introduces the case study used, an initiative concerned with addressing the prevalence of SALW abuse in domestic violence. The initiative was developed by a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agency, South-Eastern European Small Arms Clearinghouse (SEESAC), which worked in partnership with local actors associated with the Serbian NGO *Viktimološko društvo Srbije* – the Victimology Society of Serbia (VDS). I use this case study to demonstrate how gender security is produced through hybrid power relations, highlighting the benefits of a feminist post-structural approach to hybridity. In the third part of the article, I unpack the way in which ‘gender security’ is produced and configured through hybrid interactions, paying close attention to the ways in which diverse perspectives about war shape post-war policy. The final part of the article highlights how the feminist approach to hybridity offers a nuanced perception of the power relations between local and international actors. I conclude by reflecting upon the implications of a feminist approach to hybridity.

Hybridity: Including Experiences and Gender

Hybridity is a concept that has taken the critical peacebuilding field by storm. Special issues of *Global Governance* (2012), the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* (2012) and *Peacebuilding* (2013) all point to an impressive take-up rate for a concept that became popularized in 2009–10 (Richmond 2010; Mac Ginty 2010). Earlier discussion about hybridity can be found in a diverse range of fields, including biology and anthropology, but most notably in postcolonial explorations of diasporas and culture (Hutnyk 2005, 79–81; Peterson 2012, 223). For many postcolonial investigations, hybridity is a useful way of conceptualizing how identities are made, especially amongst migrants (Sajed 2013, 41–61). For others, including Homi Bhabha, who investigated the location of culture, hybridity is a ‘sign of the productivity of colonial power’ (1985, 154). That is, by viewing some of the effects of colonial power as ‘the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions’, power relations can be rethought (Bhabha 1985, 154). For postcolonial cultural theory, hybridity is distinct from orientalism by allowing for a more complex and slippery conceptualization of power relations between the colonized and colonial power. These postcolonial insights can be (and have been) reapplied to peace and conflict studies, allowing exploration of power relations between local and international actors in different ways.

In the field of post-conflict studies, hybridity is a way of engaging beyond the one-dimensional critiques of the liberal peace. The liberal peace thesis describes the promotion of ‘liberalization’ by international agencies and institutions in post-conflict contexts, in the belief that this would establish a sustainable peace (as in Helman and Ratner 1993). Critiques of the liberal peace are extensive

(for instance Paris 2002, 2004; Chandler 1999), and argue that international peacekeeping operations resemble a 'mission civilisatrice' imposing a western neo-liberal peace (Paris 2002). Liberal objectives may certainly underpin many international ambitions in peacebuilding and post-conflict statebuilding, coalescing around the ideas of democratization, the rule of law, human rights, free and globalized markets, and neo-liberal development as a means of creating stable and lasting peace. However, these arguments suggest that international institutions and actors are imposing an agenda onto the local context, forming pictures which 'tend towards caricatures', imagining a monolithic and 'all powerful liberal internationalism' (Mac Ginty 2010, 391). That is, the liberal peace thesis fails to notice how local actors find ways to 'subvert, exhaust, renegotiate and resist the liberal peace' (Mac Ginty 2011, 6–7).

To highlight how 'the "power" of liberal peacebuilding is inevitably fragmented' (Richmond 2010, 692), I turn to the notion of hybridity. Broadly, hybridity seeks to interrogate patterns of local and international interactions in post-conflict contexts. Hybridity is not a 'third way' distinct from liberal and indigenous peacebuilding, but, rather, highlights local and international intensities shaping peacebuilding processes while recognizing the fuzziness of interactions between diverse actors, agendas and structures. Furthermore, the concept allows us to notice fluidity in power relations between local and international actors, enabling a perception of how 'different actors and processes cooperate and compete on different issue agendas' (Mac Ginty 2010, 397). Noticing hybridity simulates complexity, avoiding simplistic 'neat analysis' of conflict and post-conflict processes (Mac Ginty 2011, 2). As Peterson (2012, 10) points out, hybridity is an analytical tool rather than an expression of a desirable political project. In short, hybridity makes us realize how the power relations that affect PSD processes are complex and messy, allowing us to de-romanticize the local and move beyond a conceptualization of an all-powerful international community.

Furthermore, hybridity allows us to realize the diversity of locals and internationals, recognizing that these categories are not clear-cut. For instance, the international institution investigated in this article, SEESAC, hires a number of people who were born in Serbia, grew up in Serbia, and would identify themselves as Serbian. Are they local or international? In this article, their positioning is largely understood as international to recognize that their job and funding has been shaped by the demands of the UNDP and other international agencies. But this example is illustrative of how the categorization of 'local' and 'international' is one with inherent slippage, and hybridity is a concept capturing this very slippage while still allowing an exploration of the interactions between local and international actors.

There are different ways of understanding hybridity: as the 'grafting' together of two distinct entities (as in biology); or as a sense of 'in-betweenness' where two cultures are straddled (as in the ideas of Homi Bhabha); or as something which just 'is', given that we are all hybrids. These debates on how to

conceptualize hybridity are also played out in peace and conflict studies (Visoka 2012, 25–26). For Oliver Richmond (2010), hybridity can be understood as ‘in-betweenness’ where local and international co-exist in both positive and negative ways. For Roger Mac Ginty, hybridity can be understood as a process which ‘visualise[s] the interplay among the factors that make up hybrid forms of peace’ (2011, 8–9, 77–80). Within this process, there is constant interaction between the *compliance* and *incentivizing* powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures, and the ability of local actors to *resist, ignore, or adopt* liberal peace interventions, and the ability of local actors, networks and structures to *present and maintain* alternative forms of peacemaking (Mac Ginty 2011: 8–9, 77–80). These debates about the conceptualization of hybridity relate to how power relations are understood, and the way in which complexity and slippage between local and international actors are described.

However, there is potential to go further, and deepen our perception of the power relations that exist within post-conflict PSD initiatives. Feminist ideas and concepts open the way for a richer analysis of power, which starts with the popular insight that the personal is political (Hanisch [1969] 2006). As Cynthia Enloe points out, this ‘disturbing’ insight about the relationship between the personal and the political reminds us that ‘politics is not shaped merely by what happens in legislative debates, voting booths or war rooms’ (2000, 195). Thus, hybrid initiatives are not shaped simply by formal rules and processes bought to the fore by clearly defined groups of local and international actors. On the contrary, a number of (apparently) hidden or mundane practices and processes operate alongside macro-political processes to shape the precise form and configuration of a PSD initiative. This approach challenges some of the existing applications of hybridity, which lean towards macro-political processes, noticing hybrid political orders (Johnson and Hutchison 2012) and institutional or public practices (Visoka 2012).

Moreover, the feminist insight that the personal is political offers a way of noticing the diversity of the personal and how that has ramifications for political processes and practices. While hybridity takes local experiences and responses seriously, and recognizes the importance of the everyday (Richmond 2010), the concept does not deeply consider the diversity of the personal. In particular, hybridity seems to struggle somewhat to make the ‘international’ personal, frequently seeing the ‘international’ as a structure or organization. Thus, to develop a nuanced perception of the power relations within a hybrid PSD initiative, we need to pay deeper attention to the diverse ways in which the personal is political for *both* international and local actors.

I have suggested elsewhere (McLeod, forthcoming) that reconceiving the notion that ‘the personal is political’ as personal-political imaginations can open fresh ways of rethinking representation and subjectivity. One way of rethinking representation and subjectivity in relation to our understanding of hybridity involves looking at ways in which bodies react to and experience war. Different bodies experience war in different ways (Sylvester 2011b, 2013), and these

diverse physical, emotional and mediated experiences clash, overprint, coalesce and act to craft a particular post-war initiative into existence. The proposal that diverse bodies across the globe can access and experience war in ‘differentiated and mediated ways’, via physical or emotional exposure to a set of circumstances (Sylvester 2013, 5) has implications for our understanding of hybridity, and in particular how scholars might understand ‘the international’ in PSD policy. For instance, to say that ‘in this global time’ I am in a ‘war matrix’ where I touch and experience war is categorically not to underplay the position of privilege that I personally have as a researcher living and working in England. While I may read, write, reflect upon and travel to conflict-affected places, I do not directly live war. I have not experienced the emotional and physical hardship of war. However, like any academic researcher, I may draw upon a set of scholarship ‘about’ that war which informs my problematization of the post-war context. Following this line of thought, it is reasonable to expect that international actors working in post-conflict areas are drawing upon personal and organizational perspectives of war across time and space, and, significantly, making use of these experiences to develop hybrid PSD initiatives.

The suggestion that different bodies experience war in different ways draws upon the understanding that the body is far more than a surface where meanings are inscribed. Rather, the body ‘suffers, enjoys, and responds to the exteriority of the world’ (Butler 2010, 33–34). This means that emotions are not something privately experienced, but rather that emotions and affect enable a ‘certain field of intelligibility’ (Butler 2010, 34) that guides how experience is subjectively narrated. That is, how the body ‘feels’ the world impinges upon how the world is experienced and described. For this reason, when talking about ‘experiencing’ war across time and space, ‘experience’ is something more than a lived truth guiding action. Rather, experience is subjectively narrated. That is, experience has ‘no inherent essential meaning’ and is given meaning through ‘particular ways of thinking, particular discourses’, constituting a specific sense of self (Weedon 1997, 32–33). This matters when thinking about local and international actors—how might a sense of being local or international come about? And how might these spatial positionings shape self-perceptions about experience? I will return to these questions later in this article. For now, we need to grasp that the ‘experience’ which is subjectively narrated is intimately connected with the political choices made and articulated. In part, this is because experiential understandings of war ‘provide information about what it is, how it operates, who takes part, [and] how they are affected and affecting’ (Sylvester 2011a, 129). Personal experiences about war (across space and time) inform political processes and practices, they are not merely personal and they are not irrelevant. Rather, these experiences are public, powerful and *political*. Hence, war experiences are narrated in ways which are indicative of political subjectivities.

Taking the two feminist insights that I have discussed so far—that the personal is political, and that bodies experience war in diverse ways across time and space—I believe that it is possible to give the concept of hybridity more texture

and depth. It is important to recognize that both local and international actors will have diverse (and possibly divergent) experiences of war and post-war, and to understand these personal experiences as being simultaneously political. Furthermore, these experiences are negotiated in hybrid PSD initiatives. Paying attention to these experiences and how they are negotiated matters as they shape the ways in which conflicts are problematized. These representations become constitutive of the very 'problem' which is deemed necessary to resolve (Vaughan-Williams 2006). Thus, the crux of the point which I wish to make is: *To better understand the power relations shaping negotiations between local and international actors in the making of a hybrid PSD initiative, we need to dig deeper and account for the importance of diverse and personal experiences.* These personal-political experiences may manifest as memories, as perceptions, as hope, as scars, as organizational policy and so on. This follows the Foucauldian insight that 'everything we can see or conceive of is a product of power relations', rendering 'every decision, every representation, every aspect of the social world, political' (Shepherd 2008, 22). Furthermore, realizing the complexity of war and post-war experiences across time and space enables us to comprehend actors working in post-conflict contexts as subjects constituted by a multiplicity of positions whose articulation is always precarious and temporary. These claims are profoundly poststructural in that the contingency and instability of identities are stressed. Thus, this poststructural investigation allows 'local' and 'international' to take on a deeper level of complexity, resulting in a richer perception of the power relations between these actors as they develop a hybrid PSD initiative.

Noticing how personal-political experiences of war and post-war are negotiated by local and international actors matters because it allows a perception of how divergent experiences might contribute in apparently unseen ways to PSD initiatives. More importantly, noticing these microprocesses requires paying close attention to the construction of the concepts underpinning hybrid PSD initiatives: for instance, 'gender security'. Gender security can take on different meanings and interpretations (see McLeod 2011a), and the rest of this article highlights how the negotiation of divergent perspectives has cast a *particular and specific* meaning of gender security into existence. The very way in which 'gender security' is constituted matters. It matters because it affects the perception of *gender* which is utilized, and the understanding of *security* that is enacted. In this instance, what the feminist lens on hybridity does is make 'gender' more complex. It is frightening to think about how uncomplicated many of us assume gender to be, and take for granted that gender is a stable, biological category. Remembering the complexity of gender, and pointing out the complex interactions invoked in the production of a set of logics upon which a hybrid PSD initiative is built, it is clear how other conceptual attachments within PSD policy (e.g. democracy, civil society, transitional justice) are reliant upon gendered hybrid personal-political experiences.

Hybridity and Reducing SALW Abuse in Domestic Violence

To illuminate how diverse and personal-political war experiences configure ‘gender security’ in a certain way, I draw upon narratives around the production of an initiative related to small arms and light weapons abuse in domestic violence. During 2007 and 2008, local and international actors in Serbia sought to develop an initiative connecting post-conflict proliferation of SALW and domestic violence. In early 2007, SEESAC set aside 15 per cent of its budget to meet gender mainstreaming targets established by the UNDP.² One project that emerged was a report published by SEESAC at the end of 2007, *Firearms Possession and Domestic Violence in the Western Balkans, A Comparative Study of Legislation and Implementation Mechanisms* (Dokmanović 2007). This was the first study specifically examining SALW abuse in domestic violence cases in the Western Balkans. The report was written by a local actor, who drew upon her localized knowledge, expertise and memories to make recommendations. In the case of Serbia, recommendations included making changes to the Criminal Code of Serbia to tighten loopholes relating to gun ownership, particularly where a family member was known to be at risk. Throughout 2008, SEESAC supported a series of meetings where local activists presented to Serbian institutions the need to implement some of the recommendations of the report.

The international–local partnership that underpinned this particular initiative can be best understood as a hybrid peacebuilding practice. Elements of the initiative, like the UNDP’s concern with gender mainstreaming, reflect certain gender-related standards and expectations that form part of the liberal peace agenda (Väyrynen 2004). Those who were asked to research and write the report were local actors based across Serbia and the Western Balkans, drawing upon interviews with representatives of the police, judges and women’s NGOs (Dokmanović 2007, 59–69).³ Interestingly, however, this particular initiative did not start as a specifically hybrid one. The job for lead researcher on the report was advertised internationally by the UNDP, and despite a number of strong applicants, ‘the best was the Serbian lady’.⁴ That a ‘local’ actor was hired was described as ‘really very lucky’ because it ‘facilitated the follow-up work’ and meant that there was already a network.⁵ The positive attributes attached to her local knowledge is indicative of a certain set of normative claims about who has knowledge—a point that I shall return to. But this is an illustrative reminder of the different ways that hybridity can come about within peacekeeping.

As already suggested, the practice of hybridity crafts a particular notion of gender security into existence. To investigate how ‘gender security’ was made within this particular initiative, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with six people involved in the development and implementation of this specific initiative. However, these interviews are located within the knowledge gathered from a total of 79 interviews with gender advocates⁶ in Serbia between February and August 2008, and June and September 2009. Furthermore, I draw upon written documents gathered from the SEESAC website, including strategy papers, VDS reports and press releases, as well as the final report to support a broader

intertextual perception based upon layers of multi-sited and situated (and always incomplete) knowledge. Interview questions were not directed at asking people to provide their memory-narrative of the war in Yugoslavia. Rather, war experiences were derived ‘from the ways people described them’ (Sylvester 2011a, 125). That is, my investigation started from a curiosity about what post-war gender security *meant* for actors, and in this way subjective personal-political experiences of war emerged.

Making Gender Security

Noticing the hybridity of the personal-political experiences described contributes to our understanding of the logics which shape the concepts underpinning initiatives. In this instance, the concept is gender security. ‘Gender security’ relies upon an intersection and constellation of both ‘gender’ and ‘security’, and no single, agreed upon definition exists for either concept (Detraz 2012, 2–12). That said, gender security can be taken to generally refer to a concern with addressing insecurity arising out of a specific experience of gender, where gender is a noun, verb and logic shaping the world in which we live (Shepherd 2010). Since the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on 31 October 2000, urging for an increased consideration of gender in all post-conflict processes, deliberations about ‘gender security’ have been amplified across activist and institutional sites (Cohn 2008). In a context where ‘gender security’ is being rapidly mainstreamed by the UN system and state institutions, it is unsurprising that SEESAC’s investigation of SALW abuse in domestic violence responded to, rests upon and produces a particular configuration of gender security.

The initiative suggests that gender security is linked to human developmental needs and connects gender with women who are in need of protection. This very much reflects the logics of gender security pursued by UN institutions, although it is ‘not tenable to treat the United Nations as a monolithic organization’ (Shepherd 2008b, 392), there are elements of orthodox understandings of gender security in the connections to human development and protection. First, ‘gender’ is very much about women, and, moreover, ‘women primarily represented in a narrow essentialist definition’ as victims in need of protection: a configuration that obscures differences and sustains dominations (Puechguirbal 2010, 173). Second, the discursive links forged between gender security and human security via the focus on human developmental needs is, as David Chandler suggests, “‘the dog that didn’t bark” in that its integration into the mainstream of policymaking has reinforced, rather than challenged, existing policy frameworks’ (2008, 429). In other words, broadly speaking, the discursive logics of ‘gender security’ within this initiative do not challenge orthodox ways of thinking about gender identities or security. The following paragraphs probe into the ways that hybridity shapes this particular configuration of gender security, highlighting the effects of diverse local and international perspectives

about war upon the problematization of the post-war context, which, in turn, has shaped how gender security is practised and limited.

Gender Security as Development

International narratives about the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia were dominated by simplistic collective memories and explanations of ‘ancient hatreds’, where the wars were part of a coda of Balkan barbarity (Hansen 2005, 148–178). The Serb subject ‘was reconstituted through a separation of genocidal leaders and manipulated population’ (114) casting a wartime narrative of Serbia as aggressive and hypernationalist—at least, *more so* than other countries in the Western Balkans. It is not that these narratives do not have merit or elements of truth, but that they are dominant. Stories of the peace movement that publicly rejected the policies of the Milošević regime or accounts of daily difficulties under hyperinflation and economic sanctions are somewhat quashed under the memory narrated of Serbia-as-aggressive.

However, the initiative aiming to reduce SALW abuse in domestic violence explored in this article is a regional initiative produced by a development agency. This distinction is important, because rather than focusing on the narrative of ‘Serbia-as-aggressive’, the narrative is the ‘Balkans-as-a-traumatized-post-conflict-zone-needing-international-support’. Rather than picking out the specific post-conflict problematization of each country, the SEESAC report suggests that ‘the countries of the Western Balkans face high levels of violence, crime and human insecurity as a legacy of recent conflicts, political turbulence and economic crises’ (Dokmanović 2007, 1). The Serbian role in the wars is not seen to be any different to that of Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. The international memory of war contends that ‘individuals, communities and whole societies are traumatised from war, and trapped in cycles of violence perpetuated from generation to generation’ (Hughes and Pupavac 2005, 879). Outsiders posit themselves as ‘neutral arbiters’ able to rescue the population from trauma and suffering (880). Certainly, SEESAC’s mandate is described on its website as an organization which deals with,

The uncontrolled proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) [which] is a serious problem in South Eastern and Eastern Europe, one that has fuelled crime and insecurity, exacerbating conflict in the region and undermining post conflict peace-building. Problems related to SALW are likely to pose a serious constraint on the long-term economic and social development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe. (SEESAC 2013)

Underpinning these narratives is the need to ensure ‘long-term economic and social development’ in the region, which has been traumatized by war. Security becomes intractably connected to development, shaping an understanding of gender security as linked to human development.

Given that SEESAC is a UNDP agency, it is perhaps not surprising that gender security is configured as an extension of human security and development in a way that does not challenge orthodox security ideas (see also Hudson 2010). Certainly, as Tarja Väyrynen suggests, ‘UN discourse on gender and peace operations relies upon the feminist standpoint notion of knowledge and thereby does not radically challenge the objectivistic epistemology that characterizes modern thinking in general’ (2004, 139). It can be said that gender security becomes conceptually limited where viewed as an extension of human development and state security. However, this framing of gender security is relatively uncontroversial in Serbia, as it does not ask the Serbian state or society to accept responsibility for the war crimes committed in the name of Serbia during the 1990s (McLeod 2011a). Therefore, it is easier for local actors to adopt this configuration of gender security which does not challenge dominant international security narratives as it achieves some goals without placing actors at risk of being attacked. Co-option of SEESAC’s conceptualization of gender security allows certain post-war problems to be resolved (and, hence, the memories of war-related gender violence are being addressed) without challenging the status quo in Serbia.

Furthermore, Mirjana Dokmanović, the local actor hired to oversee the SEESAC report, agrees that gender security is related to human development and rights, and ensuring ‘physical, psychological and economic security’ across a region, otherwise ‘the basis for common trust is not there’.⁷ She links this to her memories of war, highlighting that nationalism, linked to physical, psychological and economic disparities causing insecurity, was the key driver of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia. Mirjana suggests that addressing gender violence in all manifestations—including SALW abuse in domestic violence—increases physical and psychological security. In this regard, co-option of the UN discourse on gender security is useful, supporting her view about the importance of development to achieve sustainable peace and security. However, Mirjana’s interpretations of *why* the wars happened arise from her own experiences which she uses for the basis of her explanations. The way in which these experiences are narrated is more than merely private and personal, but rather is a ‘consequence of a certain field of intelligibility that helps to form and frame our responsiveness to the impinging world’ (Butler 2010, 34). Thus, the way in which her body has experienced the wars, and the world around her, has shaped her narratives about why the wars in ex-Yugoslavia broke out.

What we have seen here is that local and international actors have drawn upon a set of narratives about why the wars in ex-Yugoslavia occurred, all of which stress the need for human development as a means of achieving sustainable, long-term security to prevent another war. These connections have simulated a meaning of gender security linked to development. What analysis reveals is the way in which there are different reasons underpinning the connections made between security and development, highlighting the diversity of experience. Individual (and often local) memories about a war interact with international and organizational ambitions and agendas that arise out of a

collective and highly mediated memory about war in ex-Yugoslavia. Thus, the formulation of ‘gender-security-as-post-conflict-development’ is reliant upon interactions between local and international actors, and divergences can be better understood by paying attention to the personal-political experiences shaping the process.

Gender Security as Protection and Prevention

Within the SEESAC initiative, gender is equated with women. The gendered body is primarily female, and specifically is a body in need of protection from violence. Throughout the report, there is slippage between gender to women and women to gender, but rarely is there a slip from gender to men. Men feature in the report as nationalist and violent hyper-masculine men who own and abuse guns, while women are in need of protection, and the gendered body in need of securing is female. That policymakers tend to equate gender with women is not a new or surprising observation. But how can connections be made between our varied wartime experiences and our gender assumptions in the shaping of post-conflict PSD initiatives?

Contrasting the wartime experiences of local and international actors allows a sense of the organizing logics that limit and make possible certain meanings of gender. During my research interviews in 2008 and 2009, many local activists recalled how war increased the availability of guns and other weapons, and that after the wars, soldiers tended to bring home weapons, resulting in a sharp increase in the prevalence of domestic violence as soldiers were demobilized.⁸ Indeed, for Lepa Mladjenović, the coordinator of a woman’s NGO in Belgrade, ‘the whole story about guns is a big story for violence against women, because it’s connected to nationalism, to war, and the production of the enemy’.⁹ Lepa stresses how gun abuse within domestic violence is connected to the patriarchy of war, a discursive logic initially made during the 1990s and one which is reinforced through her recalling of the 1990s. For many activists, war was recalled as a moment of intense patriarchy and increased prevalence of violence against women. This gives a perception of gender placing patriarchy at the centre. Critically, the increased patriarchal violence of wartime is understood by many feminists in Serbia to be a structural factor that pervades day-to-day life, beyond the increased prevalence of domestic violence.

In contrast, for international actors like SEESAC, gender concerns largely overlap with the broader picture and understanding of gender which exists amongst international organizations, and in particular the UN. The initial impetus for the focus on SALW abuse was the need to adhere to the agenda established by the UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR).¹⁰ The BCPR developed an ‘Eight Point Agenda (8PA) for Women and Girls in Crisis’ which puts forward a gender perspective focusing on the violence committed towards women in times of crisis (UNDP 2006). On its own, the document is unproblematic (after all, the 8PA *does* do what it claims to do in the title), but

set within the broader discourse of the UN, it reproduces and supports a discourse founded upon 'the essentialist and biological binary hierarchy of sexes' (Väyrynen 2004, 137). Acting in this discursive context, SEESAC's gender mainstreaming process was informed by a picture of women who need protection from violence (naturally?) perpetuated by men. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that one international advocate told me that 'it's difficult in the heavy work like destruction and stockpile management to include gender, so of course we would focus on the softer side of awareness and violence prevention'.¹¹ This statement is somewhat surprising, given that it *is* possible to include gender concerns in destruction and stockpile management (see Bourne et al. 2006, 211–221). But the description of needing to focus on 'softer' concerns in order to achieve broader ambitions to include gender is revealing.

It is revealing in that it invokes connections between femininity and softness (McLeod 2011a, 600), making men and masculinity, by implication, 'hard'. More than that, it distinguishes between different types of violence and means of addressing violence. Thus 'heavy work' seeks to remove the possibility of violence, where the destruction of weapon stockpiles makes violence impossible. Yet the 'softer' domestic violence is merely something which needs awareness about, rather than making (domestic) violence impossible. These images of female vulnerability operate to confine our gender imagination. Rather than including gender across all its activities, during 2008 gender was limited to the need to protect women from violence.¹² This picture of gender-as-protection creates what Tarya Väyrynen (2004) described as the 'confines of modernity', limiting the possibilities of 'gender' to women. If men feature, they are owners of weapons and filled with the possibility of violence. Masculinity then becomes equated with bad behaviour, and men are not given the possibility of behaving or acting differently. This is not to deny that, statistically speaking, men are the perpetrators of violence and women are on the receiving end of violence. But in limiting 'gender' objectives the report configures a sense of security which removes the possibility of radical changes; women need to be protected from violence, rather than men needing to be taught to express their masculinity in different ways. In this way, the confines of modernity give a picture of gender security that is one-dimensional and does not allow for change or alternative dimensions of gender that might need securing.

It is clear that wildly different ideas about why gender violence happens and how to address it distinguish international organizational policy and the views of local activists. Local activists (who are, for the most part, advocating a standpoint feminist perspective) have long stressed the importance of tackling patriarchy, highlighting how patriarchal structures of violence are enhanced by war, resulting in the increased prevalence and intensity of domestic violence. For international advocates, they are operating within an organizational perspective about gender in post-conflict reconstruction, that vulnerable women must be protected. Given these very different perspectives for how wartime gender patterns account for the prevalence of SALW-related domestic violence, how can we understand why actors co-opted (or possibly ignored) the gender image

promoted by SEESAC in 2008? To realize why, I turn to a discussion of the power relations characterizing local and international interactions.

Understanding Hybridity, Gender and Power

Power relations between the local and international lie at the very core of analyses about hybrid peace processes, and recognizes the power of both spaces. However, if used in a benign way, hybridity suggests that local and international actors easily and happily reach a mutually agreed compromise. Such perspectives lend themselves to a rather romantic view of hybridity, avoiding questions about the quality of peace. Indeed, the policies are not simple compromises. The configuration of security as human development and of gender as protection does certainly seem to reflect broader UN discourses, and implies that local actors merely co-opt broader UN discourses. But this perspective does not accord local actors any agency—that is, local actors do have the ability to resist, ignore, adapt, present and maintain international liberal peace interventions (Mac Ginty 2011, 77–80). I suggest that the situation is more complex and arises out of dynamics of power relations that are trickier to uncover, including how ‘localism’ is invoked and how certain locals are granted authority.

There is an attempt to craft a sense of local ownership over post-conflict PSD policy. For instance, a SEESAC employee reported that

we’re facilitating this process of implementing the recommendations of the report in terms of, ‘we can fund the roundtable, or we can fund the consultant to draft the legal changes’, but the substance of work is coming from civil society ... we didn’t want to present something to them. All the recommendations come from them, so when we present them at the roundtable, it’s not the UNDP presenting these legal recommendations, this is a process which is basically facilitating these groups to have their input.¹³

The emphasis presented to me during the interview was very much on enabling local actors to use their knowledge. There is a certainly a well-intentioned attempt to provide a sense of local ownership over the initiative, but this avoids questions about *which* locals are involved. There are multiple ‘locals’ (just like multiple ‘internationals’) and it is important to pay attention to this. These dynamics of power and privilege have important implications for understanding the concept of hybridity, and the role of co-option in hybridization processes, where co-option is understood to achieve ‘more locally resonant aims’ (Richmond and Mitchell 2011, 339)—and, not insignificantly, can shed some light upon why certain meanings of gender security are adapted.

Curiosity about the valorization of experience leads us to ask about *which* local actors and *which* international actors are involved. For instance, realizing the diversity of local and international allows a deeper consideration of what knowledge counts and why it matters, and the ways in which certain knowledge

is privileged. That is, the local actors involved in the making of an initiative are in a certain position of privileged power: perhaps they speak and write in English, enabling projection of their knowledge to English-speaking international actors. Some postcolonial investigations of migration make the point that hybridity can be experienced in different ways (Sajed 2013, 43), and this insight is worth remembering in post-conflict studies. Noticing the diversity of the local and of the international is a powerful reminder that hybridity is messy, complex and cannot be used as a one-size-fits-all template as an intentional method of peacebuilding. Rather, hybridity is the reality of peacebuilding, and we need to be critical about *how* hybridity occurs and the *effects* of the specific way in which it has occurred.

Realizing that local bodies can experience war in very different ways means that different questions can be asked about the significance of different local (or international) perspectives. Thus, asking about the diverse political perspectives of local actors in Serbia draws attention to specific dynamics within Serbian politics. Serbian feminist and women's organizing incorporates a wide range of political perspectives about the future of Serbia (McLeod forthcoming). Much of this (local) diversity relates to the extent to which political responsibility for the war crimes committed in the name of Serbia is configured as an important principle in achieving a more gender-just future. Certain groups, like Women in Black, stress that the achievement of gender security requires political responsibility (McLeod 2011b). The VDS and its activists do not proclaim the importance of political responsibility as an organization (although some members do on an individual basis), as domestic violence in Serbia is rarely linked to issues of political responsibility. As such, there is less of a need to radically reconfigure 'gender security' in response to its organizational aims. Noticing *which* local actors are involved goes some way towards explaining why certain images of gender and security are co-opted, and why hybridity occurs in particular ways, with particular actors participating.

As another way of invoking localism and local ownership over the policy, all advocates involved in the initiative stressed that VDS had done work linking SALW abuse and domestic violence before. Indeed, in 1999, VDS had proposed changes to the Criminal Code of Serbia (Nikolic-Ristanović 2002, 159–160), recommending that applications to own a gun should be refused when a family member feels at increased risk. Therefore, in interviews, a direct link was made between the (local) 1999 proposals and the (internationally led) 2008 initiative.¹⁴ For instance, SEESAC's gender advocate made it clear that she changed the policy emphasis during 2008 in response to local knowledge about what was needed. Instead of educating NGOs about SALW abuse in domestic violence, she realized that capacity-building was more useful.¹⁵ The initial strategy paper of June 2007 stresses the need to 'empower women's organisations in SEE to understand and advocate to ameliorate the specific impact SALW have on women' (SEESAC 2007). The aim was to 'empower' through enabling women's organizations to 'understand' the issue, and there is an implication here that they did not *know*. Once the project was underway, aims shifted towards developing concrete data, and

information was needed to build capacity.¹⁶ However, she also felt that the 1999 initiative had been somewhat forgotten by local actors.¹⁷

Since 1999, the interest of local actors in campaigning against SALW abuse in domestic violence had ‘drifted’ as the focus was elsewhere.¹⁸ It is this very drift and forgetting that is of interest here. Asking questions about the way that a particular initiative is recalled and why it is recalled at this time sheds some light on the power relations that exist in post-conflict PSD processes and practices. The 2008 initiative was presented as an opportunity to develop capacity in an issue that had already caught the attention of local actors. But it is questionable if the impetus would have been there without the funding provided by SEESAC. Certainly, several local advocates noted that SEESAC money made it possible to carry out sustained research, which raised awareness of the issue, encouraging certain women’s organizations to make (relatively cost-free) adjustments to their current practices.¹⁹ These adjustments—such as the inclusion of a question about SALW abuse when providing support to those experiencing domestic violence—could have been achieved before. That SEESAC was able to provide funding to develop capacity on this particular issue put the issue (back onto, at least) the agenda. Furthermore, it is fair to question if local actors felt that addressing SALW abuse in domestic violence was a key issue. For instance, email communication with local actors during summer 2013 revealed that the Criminal Code of Serbia has not been changed to tighten gun control laws as there have been other campaign priorities. In this way, there is an element of co-option and negotiation in hybrid practices and processes, the 1999 action was remembered by all actors, perhaps to justify the need for the project, or perhaps to claim or place ownership over the project. Thus, recalling an earlier action casts the initiative as being locally meaningful.

That said, when hybridity is viewed through a postcolonial lens, and specifically in relation to the work of Homi Bhabha, we are reminded that we never quite escape the power of the authoritative figure, as the hybrid object ‘retains the actual semblance of the authoritative figure’ (Bhabha 1994, 164). As such, hybridity is part of an effort by international organizations and institutions to define problems and solutions. The recalling and forgetting of various initiatives related to SALW abuse in domestic violence discussed above points to this: the problem was defined by internationals during 2008 but included a recalling of an earlier initiative from 1999 and a subsequent ‘forgetting’ by 2013. Viewed in this way, hybridity becomes an ambiguous term about partly local and partly international narratives requiring discipline and guidance from internationals: despite the very best efforts, the hybrid initiative ‘retains the actual semblance’ of international authority.

Power relations between local and international actors shape the conceptual logics of gender security. But the process is not one of a simple straight-line correlation, it is not that local *or* international power matters, it is that local *and* international power matters. Saying that local actors have merely co-opted and taken up international agendas would deny agency (and insult their intelligence). Rather, a complex set of power relations have functioned to make the policy how

it 'is', creating boundaries around meanings of 'gender' and 'security' that interlock to discipline hybrid PSD policy. The feminist approach to hybridity, which notices personal-political war experiences and knowledge of both local and international actors, has highlighted how the conceptual logics of 'gender security' are shaped by subtle and apparently hidden power relations.

Conclusions

The fields of critical peacebuilding and feminist scholarship on peace and post-conflict reconstruction are rather like two magnificent ships passing by each other in the night. There are a number of shared concerns—for instance, how to understand the power relations between local and international actors in post-conflict contexts—but few have explicitly engaged with both feminist scholarship and contemporary peacebuilding literatures with the aim of generating a feminist use of, or challenge to, contemporary critical peacebuilding concepts. Critical peacebuilding has been mostly adequate at the inclusion of gender as an empirical category, but many analyses do not 'effectively deal with or fully [integrate] gender in the context of addressing war and its aftermath' (Ni Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011, 89). This is because a feminist curiosity places gender at the *centre* of analysis about the practice and process of post-conflict PSD policy, seeking to explore apparently invisible gender practices and processes. So, critical peacebuilding scholarship, rather like critical International Relations and critical International Political Economy, 'misunderstand what it means to use [gender] as an analytical category' (Waylen 2006, 164). That is, there is a tendency within non-feminist critical peacebuilding to assume that a gender perspective is additive and about women: i.e. that all that needs to be done is to add women and stir. From a feminist perspective, gender used as an analytical category presumes some kind of radical reconsideration of how the world is currently constituted. To this end, what I have offered here is an explicitly feminist consideration of hybridity.

The feminist perspective allows a textured perception of the personal and political experiences that matter in the development of an initiative. Furthermore, gender is made complicated and is not taken at face value: for instance, the article has highlighted that local and international interactions shape the very understandings of gender that function within a post-conflict initiative. The case study in this article indicates how diverse personal-political experiences that have been narrated have cast a configuration of gender security as being about human development and protection of vulnerable women. These insights about how *both* international and local experiences matter raise questions about how we ascribe importance to a particular set of knowledge and experience in agenda-setting. *Whose* experience of conflict matters in establishing post-conflict agendas? On the one hand, it is thought that local experience and understandings are prioritized in hybrid interventions—a perspective that leads to the valorization of hybridity. On the other hand, it is clear that international

perspectives matter too in our problematization of 'post-conflict', but not to the extent that an all-powerful international institution unilaterally imposes an agenda for post-conflict peace, security and development. Highlighting the personal-political experiences and perceptions of conflict held by both local and international actors reveals the tension at the very heart of post-conflict agenda-setting.

Furthermore, the feminist analysis of hybridity highlights the tensions between memories and agendas in delineating PSD policy. Confronting questions about the narratives of war experience could alter our perception of agenda-setting. Post-conflict agendas are often imagined to be responsive to the contemporary context, downplaying the importance of historical narratives of war experiences in shaping agendas. Noticing the temporal and spatial diversity of war experiences in hybrid PSD initiatives opens ways for non-linear and non-progressive conceptualizations of time and temporality within a post-conflict context. This matters, as it reminds us that the logics of negotiating war experiences are political and ideological. The act of remembering (always accompanied by forgetting) is not just about recalling the lived experiences of the past and present, it is also indicative of hopes, dreams and desires for the future. The war experiences recalled are perceived realities about which memories are worth invoking—and they are invoked for a reason. As such, the logics of negotiation between local and international actors are largely ideological and politically driven, which has implications for the nature of goals held about post-conflict PSD processes and practices. This is especially the case when local and international actors are asked to translate universalized ambitions to a particular context. For instance, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) has a universal goal urging for the gender mainstreaming of all post-conflict processes. But the very way in which UNSCR 1325 is translated on the ground by local and international actors depends upon their configuration of conflict and post-conflict, a perspective in part forged out of personal and political narratives of war experience. Thus, universalized ambitions are re-forged to fit the particularity of each conflict and post-conflict moment.

These realizations about the effects of power relations between local and international actors have come out of a feminist poststructural approach. Like Laura Shepherd (2014, 104), I conceive of gender as a 'foundational construct that affects and is affected by all other relations of power', where gender is 'implicated in every social process' including peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As Christine Sylvester suggests, thinking about war and post-war in a more experiential way 'requires considerably more research on the gender ghosts rattling around dominant war narratives in international law and international organisations' (2011a, 122). Paying attention to individual and collective experiences of war, and in particular how gender is produced by local and international actors, reveals the organizing logics about gender security. These organizing logics ultimately configured the boundaries of possibility and impossibility of 'gender' within a PSD initiative about gender and SALW. Paying attention to war is narrated differently and noticing the gendered power

relations at stake in post-conflict PSD processes and practices provokes significant questions about the practice of making and keeping peace. Ultimately,

A feminist curiosity reminds us to resist the closure implied in any discourse of peace, remembering that it is always important to ask on whose behalf peace is being sought or claimed and with what effects. (Shepherd 2014, 107)

Thus, the exploration of local and international power in relation to the making of hybrid PSD initiatives can be (and should be) profoundly feminist. Exploring personal-political experiences of war allows for a detailed perception about the extent of co-option involved, about whose knowledge and experience counts, and for a more temporally complex analysis of how PSD policy is produced.

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Notes

- 1 I thank Laura Shepherd for this point.
- 2 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 3 The report covers the Western Balkans: Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and FYR Macedonia. The lead researcher who wrote the report is based in Serbia, and the SEESAC offices are based in Belgrade, I focused on processes of developing and implementing the recommendations made in relation to Serbia.

- 4 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 5 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 6 The vast majority with activists of feminist and women's organizations.
- 7 Interview, Mirjana Dokmanovic, Victimology Society Serbia, Subotica, 21 May 2008.
- 8 This was reported in several interviews with me throughout 2008. Data from SOS Hotline recorded in the early 1990s suggest that approximately 40 per cent of telephone calls made to the domestic violence helpline made reference to the threat of pistols, bombs and similar weapons (see Mladjenovic and Matijašević 1996, 119–122).
- 9 Interview, Lepa Mladjenovic, Coordinator of Autonomous Women's Centre, Belgrade, 12 June 2009.
- 10 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 11 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 12 Since 2008, SEESAC has expanded its range of gender activities. For instance, it now coordinates a Women's Police Network to provide support and training to female police officers across SEE.
- 13 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 14 Interview, Mirjana Dokmanovic, Victimology Society Serbia, Subotica, 21 May 2008.
- 15 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 16 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 17 Interview, SALW Awareness Officer (SEESAC/UNDP), Belgrade, 11 April 2008.
- 18 Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic, Director, Victimology Society Serbia, Belgrade, 10 July 2008
- 19 Interview, Slavoljupka Parlovic, Legal Coordinator, Autonomous Women's Centre, Belgrade, 8 July 2008.

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