

Decolonizing branded peacebuilding: abjected women talk back to the Finnish Women, Peace and Security agenda

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The sexual politics of peace

Post-conflict reconstruction efforts, including those made under the auspices of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, often draw on the notion that a crisis functions as a potentially positive catalyst for major social and political transformations in societies and in the rebuilding of states.¹ However, the phenomenon of postwar backlash against gender-related reforms creates new forms of gendered insecurities and vulnerabilities:² the symbolic value of women during and in the aftermath of war often focuses on their contribution as reproducers of the nation and their role in embodying cultural and national borders, placing strong taboos on female sexuality and sexual violence.³ This sexual ideology, with its dual patriarchal focus on female chastity and the ‘fallen woman’,⁴ gains significance in the name of decency, virtue, honour and national survival.

This article engages with the Women, Peace and Security agenda,⁵ and the themes of this special issue of *International Affairs*, by examining postwar experiences in two contexts: Finland after the Lapland War (1944–5), and conflict in Aceh, Indonesia (1976–2005). I ask what abjected women⁶—women ‘written out of history’⁷—and their experiences can tell us about the gendered notions

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¹ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Dina Francesca Haynes and Naomi Cahn, *On the frontlines: gender, war, and post-conflict process* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 17.

² Donna Pankhurst, ‘Postwar backlash violence against women: what can “masculinity” explain?’, in Donna Pankhurst, ed., *Gendered peace: women’s struggles for postwar justice and reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 293.

³ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁴ Rauna Kuokkanen, ‘Myth and realities of Sami women: a post-colonial feminist analysis for the decolonialization and transformation of Sami society’, in Joyce Green, ed., *Making space for indigenous feminism* (Halifax, NS: Fernwoods, 2007).

⁵ For an overview, see Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, ‘Reintroducing women, peace and security’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 249–54 above.

⁶ Throughout this article, I use the terms ‘abject’ and ‘abjected’ to describe forms of life and lived experience that are excluded from comprehension through various processes. Such exclusions are treated as a form of violence. For theoretical discussion of the concept of abjection, see e.g. Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of ‘sex’* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁷ Bina D’Costa, ‘Marginalized identity: new frontiers of research of IR?’, in Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True, eds, *Feminist methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 129.

of peacebuilding, sexual ideology and potential marginalization that are entailed in embracing the WPS agenda; and I show how this marginalization forms an integral part of Finland's foreign policy brand, created by using its foreign policy tools to cultivate a positive image and a reputation as a gender-friendly nation.⁸

In this article I demonstrate that, although divided temporally and geographically, these two conflicts and their gendered aftermaths reflect the subtle colonial overtones of Finnish foreign policy through normative sexual ideology.⁹ Both contexts surfaced in Finnish political debate between the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the United Nations Security Council in 2000 and the launch of Finland's first national action plan in 2008. First, in 2005, Acehnese people celebrated the signing of a peace agreement in Helsinki after three decades of armed conflict and prepared for the first decade of post-conflict reconstruction—albeit with growing uneasiness, both that women and their embodied war experiences were sidelined from the peacebuilding efforts, and that such efforts coincided with a fear of uncontrollable women and oversexualization of their bodies. Second, in 2007 the Association for the Children of German Soldiers in Finland approached both the parliament and the government demanding financial compensation and recognition as 'collateral damage' of the war for having been subjected, together with their mothers, to several decades of shame.¹⁰

I argue that these intergenerational gendered postwar experiences in Aceh and Finnish Lapland jointly challenge the predominantly masculine development of the Finnish peacebuilding brand, within which Finland's self-image is constructed in an entirely positive light, with a selective focus on the present political moment, as a global women- and gender-friendly peacebuilder. In fact, a focus on alternative war archives—those relating to the silenced and abjected women of WPS—draws attention to the sexual ideology of WPS and potential violence in the constructed Finnish self-image: how it frames problems,¹¹ and therefore how it

⁸ For analysis of brand development as a neo-liberal foreign policy tool, see e.g. Peter van Ham, 'The rise of the brand state: the postmodern politics of image and reputation', *Foreign Affairs* 80: 4, 2001, pp. 2–6; Kyle Grayson, 'Branding "transformation" in Canadian foreign policy: human security', *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11: 2, 2004, pp. 41–68, and 'Human security, neoliberalism and corporate social responsibility', *International Politics* 47: 5, 2010, pp. 497–522.

⁹ For previous analysis of how the WPS agenda is used to construct national identity and its Others, see e.g. Laura McLeod, 'Configurations of post-conflict: impacts of representations of conflict and post-conflict upon the (political) translations of gender security within UNSCR 1325', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13: 4, 2011, pp. 594–611. For specific analysis of WPS and indigenous-settler relations in Australia, see Michelle Elizabeth Dunn, 'Localising the Australian national action plan on Women, Peace and Security: a matter of justice', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68: 3, 2014, pp. 285–99.

¹⁰ The requests were not met. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Erkki Tuomioja stated that the formal state agreement between Germany and Finland signed in 1944 on alimony for unmarried mothers and their children had ceased to exist upon the surrender of Germany in May 1945 and the ministry did not consider that the unpaid alimonies constituted a human rights violation subject to financial compensation. Likewise, the minister responsible for veteran affairs stated that such benefits were strictly restricted to those 'who suffered most' and that offspring of German soldiers were not among them. See <http://www.saksalaistensoitilaidenlapset.com/>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 17 Jan. 2016.)

¹¹ Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline, 'Approaches to gender mainstreaming: what's the problem represented to be?', in Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline, eds, *Mainstreaming politics: gendering practices and feminist theory* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2010).

produces foreign policy ‘Others’,¹² erasing certain embodied, material and structural experiences of discrimination from view.¹³ Such an analytical focus aims at making visible tensions and inconsistencies in,¹⁴ and potentially violent consequences of, the WPS agenda and peacebuilder brand development.

In the article I show that the Finnish WPS brand relies on an asexual female subject, who is tamed into a ‘good woman’: either peacebuilder or victim of violence. Any expression of sexuality that subverts these normative notions or appears uncontrollable complicates women’s access to peace and security.

I use my research data as a way to ‘talk/write back’ to Finnish foreign policy and the WPS agenda.¹⁵ This is a feminist post-colonial strategy that aims to ‘challeng[e] forms of domination and oppressive power structures’,¹⁶ making colonized erasures of lived experience visible, creating new narratives of history and providing new meanings for events and periods of time, such as that of post-conflict reconstruction. For this purpose, I draw on my ethnographic research in post-conflict Aceh in 2006–2015, alongside foreign policy documents, academic literature, poems and self-reflections on participation in WPS-related advocacy and gender training in Finland between 2000 and 2015,¹⁷ and archival research on the Lapland War, specifically focusing on indigenous–settler relations.

This choice is both strategic and practical. First, archives detailing wartime gendered and sexualized violence in Finland, including information on labour camps set up to ‘re-educate’ women, have been systematically destroyed,¹⁸ while no formal documentation of gendered experiences of conflict in Aceh exists—in fact, parties to the conflict in Aceh have used violence and physical threats to intimidate those who have tried to collect such evidence.¹⁹ Thus, retelling the women’s war stories requires searching for subjugated knowledge²⁰ and alternative war memories, which are often to be found in poems and fiction rather than in formal documents or war archives.²¹ Second, scholarship that draws solely upon

¹² David Campbell, *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*, rev. edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998; first publ. 1992); Lene Hansen, *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

¹³ Heidi Hudson, ‘(Re)framing the relationship between discourse and materiality in feminist security studies and feminist IPE’, *Politics and Gender* 11: 2, 2015, pp. 413–18; Jacqui True, ‘A tale of two feminisms in International Relations? Feminist political economy and the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *Politics and Gender* 11: 2, 2015, pp. 419–24; Nicole George, ‘Promoting Women, Peace and Security in the Pacific Islands: hot conflict/slow violence’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68: 3, 2014, pp. 314–32.

¹⁴ Caitlin Hamilton and Laura J. Shepherd, ‘The construction of gender-sensitive peacebuilding in Australia: “Advance Australia Fair”’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69: 4, 2015, p. 375.

¹⁵ bell hooks, *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1989), pp. 5–9.

¹⁶ Angelia Poon, ‘Re-writing the male text: mapping cultural spaces in Edwidge Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *A small place*’, *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 4: 2, 2000, <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i2/con42.htm>.

¹⁷ I translated UNSCR 1325 into Finnish in 2001, and participated in UNSCR 1325 national coordination meetings in Finland as a researcher between 2010 and 2015.

¹⁸ Sari Näre, ‘Esipuhe’, in Risto Joutjärvi, ed., *Valvojana naisten erityistyöleirillä: Saara Tuukkasen muistelmat 1943–1944* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2015).

¹⁹ Author’s discussion with Acehnese human rights lawyer, Oct. 2015.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Society must be defended: lectures at the Collège de France 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003).

²¹ Marjaana Jauhola, ‘“Conversations in silence”—ceramic installations shaping visual and political imagination of gendered tsunami and conflict reconstruction landscapes in Aceh’, in Andrea Peto and Aysel Gül Altınay, eds, *Gendered war, gendered memories* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming 2016).

formal policy documents and elite interviews misses sources that ‘provoke critical thinking ... [and] challeng[e] unreflective protocols of official and institutionalized sense making’.²² Finally, drawing on multiple sources, including fictional texts, protects the individuals and their families whose abjected life experiences are being discussed here.

WPS in Finland: a land ‘not in conflict’?

I can still remember the angry and astonished reactions in an all-female civil society UNSCR 1325 advocacy meeting in 2005 when the results of the meeting with Erkki Tuomioja, the (Social Democratic Party) Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, were revealed to us: a national action plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was regarded as irrelevant as ‘Finland was not a country in conflict’. Despite that initial perception, the WPS agenda has since—as a result of long-term civil society activism on the topic—become one of the strongest and most visible instruments of advocacy to promote gender equality in Finland’s foreign policy, civilian crisis management and defence policy. Formally the government has launched two NAPs, covering respectively the periods 2008–2011 and 2012–16.

A closer look at the history of WPS in Finland reveals that its promotion goes hand in hand with various other agendas which brand Finland through its foreign and security policy. Women’s rights and peace mediation were identified as ‘flagships of UN policy-making’ in the government’s campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2013–2014 term.²³ Accordingly, the second NAP was launched as part of that campaign, presented to foreign diplomatic missions in a highly formal setting, with Finnish civil society and scholars relegated to the role of spectators.

The promotion of WPS in fact became an integral part of government rhetoric in its programmes of 2011 and 2015. After the April 2015 parliamentary elections, the newly formed government stated in its strategic programme that ‘Finland will bear global responsibility and strengthen its security by promoting ... sustainable development, peacebuilding and the status of women and girls in accordance with UNSCR 1325’.²⁴ This responsibility was further framed with statements such as: ‘Finland is one of the world’s best countries in which to live ... Finland is also a land of gender equality’,²⁵ and ‘The Government will encourage different

²² Michael Shapiro, *War crimes, atrocity, and justice* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), p. 1; see also Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and world politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

²³ Alexander Stubb, ‘YK-politiikka’, <http://www.alexstubb.com/fi/work/135/>, accessed 12 April 2012, since removed. For analysis of Australia’s successful campaign for a Security Council seat, see e.g. Laura J. Shepherd and Jacqui True, ‘The Women, Peace and Security agenda and Australian leadership in the world: from rhetoric to commitment?’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68: 3, 2014, pp. 257–84; Dunn, ‘Localising the Australian national action plan on Women, Peace and Security’; Katrina Lee-Koo, ‘Implementing Australia’s national action plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68: 3, 2014, pp. 300–13.

²⁴ Prime Minister’s Office, ‘Finland, a land of solutions: Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s government, 29 May 2015’, Government Publications 12/2015 (Helsinki: Edita Prima), p. 38.

²⁵ Prime Minister’s Office, ‘Finland, a land of solutions’, p. 8.

actors in society to increase contacts between native Finns and immigrants. The risk of social exclusion among young immigrants, in particular, will be identified and special attention paid to the integration of uneducated women staying at home.²⁶

Given the recent political shift towards right-wing populism, anti-migrant sentiment and racist nationalism,²⁷ this framing of WPS reflects a wider shift from the woman-friendly and gender-equal welfare state discourse towards control of migration and borders and integration efforts targeting immigrant women, combined with a foreign and defence policy incorporating the myth that gender equality has been achieved and that the country hopes to propagate it abroad.²⁸ It has at least four consequences: first, it shifts problems and gender inequalities elsewhere, constructing an 'us–them' binary; second, it undermines analysis of inequality and discrimination based on intersections of gender with other social inequalities such as ethnicity, sexuality and religion; third, it problematically constructs a certain racial and ethnic ideal type of the Finnish identity and nation; and finally, it treats Finland, and the Finnish experience, as an exception that has no part in the politics of the global political economy, the history of colonialism, or gendered and racial structures of globalization.²⁹

Thus, the discursive turn to branded peacebuilding can be seen as part of a longer-term construction of Finland's identity as a predominantly male global problem-solver. In 2008, the year when the first Finnish NAP was adopted, Alexander Stubb, the (National Coalition Party) Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time, appointed a country brand delegation tasked with creating a strategy for Finland that would 'persuade the world to turn to us more often and more effectively'.³⁰ In its final report, entitled *How Finland will solve the world's most wicked problems: consider it solved!*³¹, the delegation identified Finland's overall existing (gender) equality as a pillar of its strength as a nation and proclaimed Finland the 'most functional society in the world'.³²

Following on the same lines, the two NAPs locate the sources of gender inequalities and violations of women's rights outside Finland: references to sexuality are

²⁶ Prime Minister's Office, 'Finland, a land of solutions', p. 41.

²⁷ See e.g. Suvi Keskinen, 'Antifeminism and white identity politics: political antagonisms in radical right-wing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3: 4, 2013, pp. 225–32; Cristian Norocel, *Our people—a tight-knit family under the same protective roof: a critical study of gendered conceptual metaphors at work in radical right populism* (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2013).

²⁸ See e.g. Marjaana Jauhola and Johanna Kantola, 'Globaali sukupuolipolitiikka', in Marita Husso and Risto Heiskala, eds, *Sukupuolitekijämyys* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, forthcoming 2016); Jarmila Rajas, 'Assemblage of pastoral power and sameness: a governmentality of integrating immigrant women', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2: 2, 2012, pp. 5–15; Jaana Vuori, 'Guiding migrants to the realm of gender equality', in Salla Tuori, Sari Irni, Diana Mulinari and Suvi Keskinen, eds, *Complying with colonialism: gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). See also the observation that Australia's NAP lacks focus on immigration and citizenship policies in Shepherd and True, 'The Women, Peace and Security agenda and Australian leadership in the world'.

²⁹ Jauhola and Kantola, 'Globaali sukupuolipolitiikka'.

³⁰ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 'Brändi-hanke on Suomelle erittäin tärkeä', 15 July 2009, <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/Print.aspx?contentid=167894&>.

³¹ Country Brand Delegation, *Mission for Finland! How Finland will solve the world's most wicked problems. Consider it solved!*, Country Brand Report, 25 Nov. 2010, http://www.demoshelsinki.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TS_Report_EN.pdf.

³² Country Brand Delegation, *Mission for Finland!*, p. 63.

restricted to promotion of sexual and reproductive rights and efforts to combat sexual violence through foreign policy instruments such as diplomacy, civilian and military crisis management operations, and development aid. However, in 2015 the government introduced an overall 40 per cent cut to the development cooperation budget, including cuts in support for the UN, humanitarian aid, reconstruction assistance for failed or fragile states, peace mediation and the WPS agenda. It also made a major funding transfer from civil society organizations to the promotion of exports, investments and private sector development.³³

Contrary to the assumptions underlying the Finnish WPS commitments (diminished as those may be in the context of budget cuts), Finland is in fact directly implicated in gendered logics of sexuality. To demonstrate this, in the following two sections of the article I focus on two contexts that confound a narrow interpretation of WPS: those of the aftermaths of the Lapland War and of the armed conflict in Aceh, Indonesia.

The aftermath of the Lapland War: the 'Maiden of Finland'³⁴ vs the whores of the Nazis

In this section, I turn to the postwar history writing that has controlled both the national meanings given to the Lapland War and the sexual relationships that were formed between Finnish women and German soldiers in Finnish Lapland during the Second World War. I treat this work as embodying a sexual ideology aiming to tame, or 'reintegrate', women's sexuality in conformity with national postwar ideals of Finnishness, chastity and nuclear family life. I position this alongside political and economic reforms that had devastating impacts on Lapland as a whole, and in particular on relations between ethnic settler Finns and the indigenous Sámi people.

I analyse the sexual politics of the Lapland War through the award-winning novel *Midwife* by Finnish author Katja Kettu, published in 2011—the year in which the second Finnish NAP was drafted. The main events of the novel take place in the municipality of Petsamo on the Barents Sea, the homeland of indigenous Skolt Sámis and an area Finland lost to the Soviet Union in the war.³⁵ In essence, the novel narrates a sexual relationship between the half-Skolt Sámi village-based birth attendant 'Midwife' in her late thirties and the war-traumatized Nazi war photographer and intelligence agent Johann Angelhurst, also revealed in the novel to be half German and half Sámi.

³³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 'Breakdown of Finnish development aid cuts further specified', news release 13 Oct. 2015, <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=335771&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>.

³⁴ 'Maiden of Finland' refers to the national gendered personification of the Finnish nation and territory: see e.g. Johanna Valenius, *Undressing the maid: gender, sexuality, and the body in the construction of the Finnish nation* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004).

³⁵ Currently, the Skolt Sámi are the smallest ethnic group of the overall 60,000–100,000 Sámis residing in Finland; most Skolt Sámi were forcibly relocated from their homeland as a consequence of the war. Sámi are the only indigenous peoples within the territory of the European Union, residing in four countries of Arctic Europe: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. Despite activism by Sámi over many decades, Finland has failed to ratify the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which would guarantee Sámis the right to exercise control over their economic, social and cultural development.

The author openly acknowledges having conducted research into the historical period she describes and having read her grandmother's letters to anchor the fictional story in actual places and real-life events.³⁶ Thus the novel effectively disrupts boundaries between the genres of autoethnography, autobiography, historical novel and official war archive.

Using a technique of layered narratives, the novel, I suggest, provides new openings for decolonizing Finland's gendered war history. To see these requires reading between the lines, for on the face of it the linear wartime plot seems to reiterate the usual motifs of women as victims of war and the story of transition from a dangerous wartime romantic love to a domesticated postwar nuclear family. However, read as a post-colonial 'talking back' text, the novel rewrites war history from the perspective of the indigenous female Skolt Sámi protagonist.

Katja Kettu has argued that a person 'from the north' automatically belongs to a geographical periphery of Finland and thus often has a perspective unintelligible to those living in southern Finland.³⁷ To her, the task of the artist and author is to side with the weak and oppressed and raise awareness of injustices that would otherwise not be heard: 'In the north, one can take a look at the world by going beyond the nation-state to a much wider perspective.'³⁸

Throughout the novel, without revealing her real name, the protagonist enumerates the insulting names given to her: 'midwife by the grace of God', 'child of a wretch Red Guard and village-idiot's wench', 'squint-eye', 'wild eye', 'Angel of the Third Reich', and 'feared bedfellow of the SS-Obersturmsführer'. Her real name is revealed in the epilogue written by the Midwife's granddaughter at the writer's residence where she finalized the manuscript for the book. This simultaneous naming, unnameing and renaming can be read as a post-colonial strategy that rewrites the abjected Skolt Sámi perspective on Finnish history and reveals both the colonial complicity of the narratives of Finnish postwar gender order and the exploitation of Sámi and their traditional territories in efforts to modernize Finnish Lapland and reconstruct postwar Finland.³⁹

During the Second World War, approximately 200,000 German soldiers were stationed in the northern provinces of Finland as part of a military alliance formed between the governments of Finland and Germany. The armistice signed between the Soviet Union and Finland in September 1944 turned these former military allies into enemies: German troops were given two weeks to withdraw from Finnish territory. The retreating Germans destroyed not only strategic military infrastructure but also civilian houses, and slaughtered thousands of reindeer, the main source of Sámi livelihood. The last German troops departed in April 1945.

The postwar dystopian experiences of many 'German brides' and their offspring have included naming, shaming and silencing. Some women, labelled as lazy and

³⁶ Maria Ruuska, 'SS-Miesten Jäljillä', 31 Oct. 2015, <http://Ylioppilaslehti.Fi/2011/10/Ss-Miesten-Jaljilla/>.

³⁷ Katja Kettu, 'Kettuilla: pohjoisen taika', *Kaltio* 68: 1, 2012, electronic version available at: <http://www.kaltio.fi/lehtiarkisto/kaltio-1-2012/kettu112>.

³⁸ Kettu, 'Kettuilla: pohjoisen taika'.

³⁹ For a critical analysis of embeddedness of Finnish and wider Nordic feminism in this form of violence, see e.g. Ina Knoblock and Rauna Kuokkanen, 'Decolonizing feminism in the North: a conversation with Rauna Kuokkanen', *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 23: 4, 2015, pp. 275–81.

rebellious, were threatened with exile to labour camps on the grounds of not only their political and 'immoral behaviour' but also their ethnicity.⁴⁰ Roughly 1,000 'German brides' accompanied the withdrawing German troops in September 1944, some going voluntarily and some taken by force.⁴¹ Of that total, 650 returned and were interned in camps, interrogated, accused of espionage and betrayal of the 'fatherland', sentenced for illegal departure and further subjected to humiliation and discrimination by their families and communities.⁴²

Thus 'the burning of Lapland' left its mark not only on individuals, but also on the collective identity and self-understanding of people—in Lapland, but also in Germany.⁴³ Punishment of women for 'sexual collaboration' or fraternization with Nazis included public humiliation, head-shaving, exclusion from their communities, and vilification as whores, traitors, tarts and loose women.⁴⁴ This derogatory language was part of Russian war propaganda in Finland,⁴⁵ but also featured in Finnish soldiers' mocking wartime songs.⁴⁶

Moreover, the state apparatus, the national intelligence agency established for wartime information-gathering and censorship, was the primary actor in the public condemnation of these women. By focusing on women's 'immorality' and 'sexual indecency' it aimed to control their behaviour in the name of the wartime home front's morals and national pride.⁴⁷ In Finnish Lapland, women's behaviour was also judged against the sexual ideology of the conservative revivalist Laestadian religious movement.⁴⁸

The sexual morals and respectability of women during the war have been the subject of several films and novels since the first decade of postwar reconstruction, while feminist research has analysed the sexual ideology of the Laestadian movement and its fortunes over the past 70 years. In the past ten to 15 years, too, there has been increased interest on the part of women separated from the war years by one or two generations in documenting the taboo experiences of the war through fiction writing and films. These efforts have emerged in parallel with

⁴⁰ Näre, 'Esipuhe', pp. 10–11.

⁴¹ Kauko Rumpunen and Ohto Manninen, *Jatkosodan hallitusten iltakoulujen pöytäkirjat: 'faktillisesti tämä tarkoittaa antautumista'* (Helsinki: Edita, 2009).

⁴² Tarja Väyrynen, 'Muted national memory: when the Hitler's brides speak the truth', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16: 2, 2013, pp. 224–5.

⁴³ Maria Lähteenmäki, *Jänkäjäkääreitä ja parakkipiikoja: Lappilaisten sotakokemuksia 1939–1945* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999).

⁴⁴ Soili Ylimartimo, 'Niin kö veljekset olisivat saksalaiset ja suomalaiset sillon ollu', in Heikki Annanpalo, Ritva Tuomaala and Marja Tuominen, eds, *Saatiin tämä vapaus pitää: tutkija kohtaa rovaniemäläisveteraanin* (Rovaniemi: Rovaniemen kaupunki, maalaiskunta & seurakunta, 2001); Claire Duchon, *Women's rights and women's lives in France 1944–68* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 12–16; Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, *Children of World War II: the hidden enemy legacy* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 404–7; Kathleen Stokker, *Folklore fights the Nazis: humour in occupied Norway, 1940–1945* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), pp. 57–70.

⁴⁵ Lars Westerlund, *Saksalaisten sotilaiden lapset: ulkomaalaisten sotilaiden lapset Suomessa 1940–1948*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Nord Print, 2011), p. 326.

⁴⁶ Hanna Mikkola, 'Puhetta puuttuvasta: naiset korsuperinteen keruukilpailun aineistoissa', *Elore* 15: 2, 2008, pp. 6–8.

⁴⁷ Marianne Junila, *Kotirintaman aseveljeyttä: Suomalaisen siviiliväestön ja saksalaisen sotaväen rinnakkainelo Pohjois-Suomessa 1941–1944* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, 2000), pp. 147, 62–4; Westerlund, *Saksalaisten sotilaiden lapset*, pp. 338–40.

⁴⁸ This conservative revivalist movement bears the name of its founder, Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–61), a Swedish–Sámi priest. It initially became popular in the Nordic Sámi population but has since spread among ethnic Finns. Its doctrine strictly forbids premarital sex, abortion and contraception.

the focus on WPS in Finnish foreign policy, and alongside scholarly attempts to rewrite the canonized war and postwar reconstruction narratives.⁴⁹ These attempts, I argue, reveal cracks in the national writing of wartime history, rewrite the wartime ‘herstory’, and challenge the non-recognition of indigenous Sámi women and their war experience in the Finnish NAPs.

To date, feminist scholars have focused on the novel *Midwife* as an account of gendered experience of sexual violence and female agency.⁵⁰ In this article, however, I do not follow this reading, but turn instead to other affective modes of the novel—embodied expressions of vitality, sexual desire and lust. I analyse the logics of sexuality in the novel together with the wider framework of political economy in order to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflict and to connect the discursive and the materiality to make visible their co-constitution through sexual violence in conflicts.⁵¹ Along these lines, I read the novel as an attempt to recount the gendered experience of Skolt Sámi in the postwar dystopia and the loss of vitality resulting from the rebuilding and modernization of Finnish Lapland in the aftermath of the war at the expense of indigenous peoples. This in turn reveals a lack of localization of the WPS agenda, and the local exclusions inherent in Finland’s state-led branded peacebuilding.

A close reading of poems published during the first postwar reconstruction decade (1945–55) in the periodical *Kaltio* corroborates *Midwife*’s experiences as a ‘fallen woman’ of Lapland. This magazine, also referred to as the ‘Cultural Mirror of the Young North’, for which Katja Kettu was interviewed in 2012, was established in 1945 by two war veterans upon their return to the burnt-out north of Finland in the hope of building a better and more prosperous future, ‘not only for Lapland, but for the whole “fatherland”’.⁵² Whereas the majority of the articles in the magazine focus on the cultural and economic rebuilding and modernization of Lapland through the eyes of male ethnic Finns, a couple of female-authored poems are worth attention.

Just like the work of the Finnish male landscape painters and authors of postwar Lapland, the poems use strong metaphors of Lapland nature, such as snow and the aurora borealis. I deliberately read these metaphors as layered accounts of female lust, desire and sexual pleasure. Laid out on the magazine’s pages next to postwar advertisements for home improvement and consumer items to signify the rebuilding of homes in the aftermath of the war, these poems actively challenge the normalized and controlled image of postwar sex and sexuality as reserved for the heteronormative postwar nuclear family and its middle-class gendered order.

⁴⁹ Tarja Väyrynen, ‘Keeping the trauma of war open in the male body: resisting the hegemonic forms of masculinity and national identity in visual arts’, *Journal of Gender Studies* 22: 2, 2013, pp. 137–51; Riitta Jyttilä, ‘Sota ja seksuaalisesta väkivallasta kertominen kotimaisessa nykykirjallisuudessa’, *Sukupuolentutkimuksen päivät 2014*, 21–22 Nov. 2014; Väyrynen, ‘Muted national memory’.

⁵⁰ Jyttilä, ‘Sota ja seksuaalisesta väkivallasta kertominen kotimaisessa nykykirjallisuudessa’; Satu Koho, “Ilma on kohmeista hiliä”: paikan kokemista ja tunteiden tiloja Katja Ketun *Kättilössä*”, in Satu Koho, Jyrki Korpua, Salla Rahikkala and Kasimir Sandbacka, eds, *Mahdollinen kirja* (Oulu: Oulun yliopisto, 2014).

⁵¹ Hudson, ‘(Re)framing the relationship between discourse and materiality’; True, ‘A tale of two feminisms?’.

⁵² Reino Rinne, ‘Tarvitaan henkistä tukea’, *Kaltio* 1: 2, 1945 (translation by the present author).

Leaving open the object of desire, and focusing on the affective side of sexuality, these poems can be seen to form an archival source for the novel *Midwife*. The narrative graphically describes not only lust, desire and sexual intercourse between the main protagonists, but also vitality,⁵³ politics of the body and sexual ideologies through ‘lustful motherhood’⁵⁴ and erotic female friendships. Thus, the expression of vitality and lust not only subverts the normalized and ‘hygienic’ ideals of heterosexuality and motherhood in the postwar Finnish nation-state, it also makes vocal and visible Skolt Sámi matriarchal culture.⁵⁵

Thus, I argue that reading the poems and the novel as expressions of female sexuality and freedom—a wartime love story—dismisses the projection of Sámi dystopia and colonial racism embedded in the postwar reconstruction period. *Kaltio* magazine articles from the first decade of reconstruction recount how postwar Lapland lacks culture, treating Sámi culture as exotic, yet inferior to ‘Finnish’ culture. The remedies prescribed are liberalization, economic modernization and the promotion of Finnish culture and social life. This economic ideology, focusing on industrialization, electrification through hydroelectric power generated from northern rivers, and prospects for mining and industrial forestry, is outlined using full-page advertisements with headlines such as ‘Business as Usual’ (1949), featuring quotations from and images of the British wartime prime minister Winston Churchill to promote the free market economy as the route to well-being for Lapland.⁵⁶

The theatre director and Skolt Sámi activist Pauliina Feodoroff has recently described how she was raised in the postwar period in a ‘broken matriarchy’ whose songs had been silenced before she was born: loss of land and property, long displacement and resettlement have affected the vitality of Sámi family and societal structures and restricted the mental landscapes available for the Skolt Sámi community in the last 70 years. According to Feodoroff, all the old is replaced with ‘new’:⁵⁷

The Skolt Sámi world ended after the 1930s. We Skolt Sámi in three post-Second World War countries (Russia, Finland, Norway) live in the spatiality and temporality of apocalypse. Hydropower, nuclear weapons, forced displacements of villages, mining activity and cultural change accelerated by wars and displacements have been total: fast and extremely fatal, encompassing all spheres of life.⁵⁸

⁵³ On the connections between vitality, critique of body politics and sexual ideologies, and socialist and leftist feminism in Finland during the Second World War, see e.g. Hanne Koivisto, ‘Lawrencelaisesta rakkaushurmioista sosialistiseen avioliittoihanteeseen: vasemmistoälymyyden naiset rakkauden asialla 1930-luvun Suomessa’, in Elina Katainen and Pirkko Kotila, eds, *Työväki ja tunteet* (Helsinki: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2002).

⁵⁴ Kaisa Ahvenjärvi, ‘Äitimyyttejä ja äitisubjekteja: sukupuolen ja kansallisuuden representaatio saamelaisessa lyriikassa’, *Kulttuurintutkimus* 30: 4, 2013, pp. 23–4.

⁵⁵ Feodoroff, ‘Matriarkaatin imperatiivi’, *Taiteen edistämiskeskus TAIKE*, 10 March 2015, <http://www.taike.fi/fi/matriarkaatin-imperatiivi>.

⁵⁶ For a critical analysis of the impact of the postwar industrialization of Lapland on ecosystems and cultural dynamics, see e.g. Outi Autti, ‘Valtavirta muutoksessa: vesivoima ja paikalliset asukkaat Kemijoella’, PhD thesis, University of Oulu, 2013.

⁵⁷ Pauliina Feodoroff, ‘Matriarkaatin imperatiivi’.

⁵⁸ Helga Siljander, ‘Kolttien hidas maailmanloppu’, in Helga Siljander, ed., *Saamelaiset Suomessa: näkökulmia ja ääniä tämän päivän saamelaisuuteen* (Tallinn: Sukukansojen ystävät, 2013), p. 37. Translation by the present author.

To conclude, I suggest that when the sexual narrative of *Midwife* is reread in the context of indigenous–settler relations, economic reforms and the rebuilding of Lapland anew, and in the light of the historical details of the Petsamo and Skolt Sámi traditions and vibrant Sámi feminism, the analytical focus turns away from the ‘white liberal feminist’⁵⁹ emphasis on sexuality and sexual desire into wider questions of settler colonialism, conflict between indigenous and market economies, and indigenous political agency. The Sámi feminist scholar Rauna Kuokkanen suggests that to decolonize Finnish postwar history writing requires mourning for loss and victimhood, without which it is impossible to visualize the future and rebuild oneself and reconstruct the debate in Sámi terms.⁶⁰ Given this decolonizing impetus of postwar reconstruction in Lapland, I turn now to the ways in which the Aceh peace process and the perspective of its abject women could further help us decolonize the Finnish peacebuilder brand.

The successful Aceh peace negotiations: branding Finland at the expense of experiences of Acehnese women?

In this section I discuss how the peacebuilder brand of Finland has been constructed, first through the Aceh peace negotiations and the ceremony of the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU), facilitated by the former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari in 2005, between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM); and second, in the reiteration of a racialized and violent sexual ideology—including postwar logics of the female body, sexuality and agency—that silences Acehnese women’s lived experience of the gendered and sexualized impacts of the peace.⁶¹

On 15 August 2005, just eight months after the states of the Indian Ocean were devastated by earthquake and tsunami, representatives of the government of Indonesia and GAM signed an MoU ending 29 years of ethnonationalist armed conflict in Aceh. A photograph of the signing ceremony (reproduced here as figure 1 overleaf) shows the facilitator President Ahtisaari in the middle, Indonesian Justice and Human Rights Minister Hamid Awaludin on the left, and the head of the GAM delegation, Malik Mahmud, on the right, shaking hands in front of the international media. This image circulated globally and has become one of the most frequently used images in Finnish foreign policy communications—in policy papers, brochures and speech presentations—to symbolize both a successful peace mediation process and successful Finnish mediation skills. Three years later, in 2008, President Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize ‘for his great efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts’.⁶²

⁵⁹ Rauna Kuokkanen in Knoblock and Kuokkanen, ‘Decolonizing feminism in the North’, p. 278.

⁶⁰ Rauna Kuokkanen, ‘Saamelaiset ja kolonialismin vaikutukset nykypäivänä’, in Joel Kuortti, Mikko Lehtonen and Olli Löytty, eds, *Kolonialismin jäljet: keskustat, periferiat ja Suomi* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2007), p. 147; Rauna Kuokkanen in Knoblock and Kuokkanen. ‘Decolonizing Feminism in the North’, p. 278.

⁶¹ D’Costa, ‘Marginalized identity’, p. 129.

⁶² Norwegian Nobel Institute, ‘The Nobel Prize 2008: Martti Ahtisaari’, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2008/ahtisaari-facts.html.

Figure 1: Signature ceremony of the MoU in Helsinki on 15 August 2005



From left: Indonesian Justice and Human Rights Minister Hamid Awaludin; facilitator President Ahtisaari; head of the GAM delegation Malik Mahmud.
Photo credit: Jenni-Justiina Niemi/CMI.

In 2010, the picture and a close-up of the shaking hands reappeared in a white paper on conflict mediation published by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.⁶³ Written the same year as the country brand committee report *Consider it solved!*, the document reiterated the branded peacebuilding agenda of the government: how a small state has to be clever in its strategies to stand out in foreign policy, emphasizing civilian crisis management as a ‘success product’ and citing both President Ahtisaari’s career and his Nobel Peace Prize as evidence of Finnish male mediation expertise. Visually this is reinforced with images of the primarily male ministers at multiple locations of global policy-making, such as the UN and OECD headquarters, alongside photographs of other male mediators and diplomats. The image perpetuates the idea that a successful mediator is a masculine male who belongs to the global diplomatic elite.

Yet, simultaneously, the white paper makes a bold commitment to the WPS agenda by reiterating the importance of female mediators and women’s participation in peace processes: ‘It must be ensured that the peace mediation processes in which Finland participates can tap into practical expertise and that women’s expertise in post-conflict peacebuilding processes, often already available in conflict areas, is utilised.’⁶⁴ Given the importance of framing the Aceh peace process as a success story, and the emphasis on WPS as central to the Finnish (male) mediator identity by both the government and the former president’s conflict mediation

⁶³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Peace mediation: Finland’s guidelines* (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2010).

⁶⁴ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Peace mediation: Finland’s guidelines*, p. 16.

office, Acehese women's experiences of the peace negotiation process, the peace settlement (MoU) and the first decade of post-conflict reconstruction shout out loud as abjected and thus invisible in this brand development.

In fact, from early 2000 Acehese women's organizations were releasing reports of targeted violence against women, such as torture and rape, during the armed conflict. Several women's organizations were formed in Aceh during the decade from 1988 to 1998 when the government of Indonesia declared Aceh a 'military operation area' (*daerah operasi militer*, DOM). Their primary aim was to support internally displaced persons and victims of violence by providing food and means of livelihood, medicine and psychosocial support. During that decade-long 'military operation', government forces established village-based surveillance systems and military checkpoints, imposed curfews, and carried out house raids and arrests. Other tactics included burning houses, raping the wives and daughters of suspected supporters of the independence movement, arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and disappearances. It is estimated that 10,000 people died during the DOM decade in Aceh. During the following period of intensified conflict in the 1990s, GAM is reported to have attacked non-Acehese transmigrant communities, intimidated villagers, and kidnapped and held to ransom businessmen and government officials.⁶⁵

With the support of international funding, Acehese women's groups organized two All-Acehese Women's Peace Forums in 2000 and 2005 to 'engender' the ongoing peace talks. Yet despite these local peacebuilding efforts, the results of the MoU were disappointing, and the peace process legitimated a highly problematic elite-masculinist agenda for the post-conflict reconstruction.⁶⁶ Only one woman, Shadia Marhaban, representing the Aceh Referendum Information Centre (SIRA), participated in the GAM team from the third round onwards, although the Indonesian delegation had informally objected to her participation on the grounds that she is a woman.⁶⁷ After the peace process was concluded, Marhaban admitted having been ignorant of WPS and women's rights perspectives at the time of the negotiations; since then she has become a successful international conflict mediation expert.⁶⁸

The recent global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 highlights Marhaban's participation in the peace negotiations as one of a few positive exceptions in comparison to other male-dominated peace processes globally.⁶⁹ And

⁶⁵ Marjaana Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia: negotiating normativity through gender mainstreaming initiatives in Aceh* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 35.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Katrina Lee-Koo, 'Gender at the crossroad of conflict: tsunami and peace in post-2005 Aceh', *Feminist Review*, no. 101, 2012, pp. 59–77; Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*; Kristina Grossmann, 'Women's rights activists and the drafting process of the Islamic criminal law code', in Michael R. Feener, David Kloos and Annemarie Samuels, eds, *Islam and the limits of the state: reconfigurations of practice, community and authority in contemporary Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁶⁷ Damien Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh: a personal account of the Helsinki peace process* (Jakarta: Equinox, 2006), p. 193; author's interview with Shadia Marhaban, 6 Sept. 2007.

⁶⁸ Personal communication with Shadia Marhaban.

⁶⁹ Radhika Coomaraswamy et al., *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN Women, 2015), <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>, p. 204.

yet, strikingly, none of the critical reflections made by her and other Acehese participants in the regional consultation meeting in Kathmandu in February 2015, in preparation for the study, were included in the final report. The global study therefore problematically reiterates an understanding of peacebuilding in Aceh as an asexual and non-gendered process—rendering it as apolitical and technical, having been successfully carried out with the ‘add women and stir’ approach.

In fact, being outspoken about the importance of the role of women in politics and its compatibility with Islam,⁷⁰ Marhaban has argued that all negotiating parties, including the Indonesian government, GAM and President Ahtisaari’s facilitation team, failed to accommodate the concerns of Acehese women, in particular the female battalion Inong Balee, in relation to the post-conflict legal framework, its potential violent consequences for women, and redistributive economics.⁷¹

In the formal peace negotiation process, GAM claimed to have 3,000 male combatants, although all parties to the peace process acknowledged this to be an underestimate. After pressure from outside, the number of female members of GAM was settled at 844, although this grossly understated the number of women who were active participants in GAM in various roles.⁷² Furthermore, although the MoU signed in August 2005 made no specific reference to women or gender,⁷³ the Law on Governance of Aceh (LOGA) passed by the Indonesian parliament in June 2006 successfully incorporated eight of the 15 proposals made by the women activists to engender the post-conflict legal framework for Aceh.⁷⁴ The provision for full implementation of Islamic law, granted by the Indonesian government as an attempt to end the armed conflict in 1999, was kept out of the Helsinki talks. Marhaban has reflected critically upon this peacebuilding strategy and considers it a major mistake: ‘We thought we could solve that problem later.’⁷⁵

In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 peace accord, politically active women have increasingly become specific targets of accusations of immorality and

⁷⁰ Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh*, pp. 193–4.

⁷¹ Shadia Marhaban, ‘The reintegration of ex-combatants in postwar Aceh’, in Véronique Dudouet, Hans J. Giessmann and Katrin Planta, eds, *Postwar security transitions: participatory peacebuilding after asymmetric conflicts* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 327–8.

⁷² Henri Myrntinen, ‘Guerrillas, gangsters and contractors: integrating former combatants and its impact on SSR and development in post-conflict societies’, in Albrecht Schnabel and Vanessa Farr, eds, *Back to the roots: security sector reform and development* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2012), p. 227; on the history of Acehese women’s roles in combat, see e.g. Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*, p. 43.

⁷³ Government of Republic of Indonesia and Free Aceh Movement, ‘The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement’ (15 Aug. 2005), <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/peace/Ind%20050815.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Deputy governors, deputy regents and mayors are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the empowerment of women (articles 44 and 45), 30% quotas for women for election candidate lists (article 75), women’s representation in the Ulama Consultative Council, *Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama* MPU (article 138) and economic empowerment through women’s business groups (article 154), and enhancing education through women’s groups (article 215); women’s organizations may have a role in the provision of health sector services (elucidation of article 225, clause 2). Central government, the Acehese provincial government, district governments and Acehese residents are obliged to promote and protect the rights of women and children as well as to conduct the empowerment effort with dignity (article 231). See President of the Republic of Indonesia, ‘Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of the Year 2006 Regarding Governing of Aceh’ (2006).

⁷⁵ Suvi Turtiainen, ‘Vantaa kasvatti vakoojasta rauhanvälittäjän’, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21 Feb. 2013.

being 'out of control'.⁷⁶ This focus draws attention to the intimate connection between gendered sexual ideology and post-conflict state building, and the unfinished negotiation of the relationship between gender, Acehese ethnonationalism, the Indonesian state, Islam and decolonization;⁷⁷ and it reveals a persistent tension between the government of Indonesia, Acehese provincial government, religious leaders and women's organizations that seek to negotiate gendered notions of politics in Aceh.⁷⁸ As Katrina Lee-Koo put it, 'the failure to ensure that women, and issues specific to women, were represented throughout the peace process indicates a densely gendered, and problematic, conceptualization of peace'.⁷⁹ This conceptualization of peace was reiterated in later missions and projects.⁸⁰

The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), for example, which was led by the European Union and ASEAN and formally mandated to monitor the implementation of the MoU, failed to include a gendered focus in its work. Only during the final months of its lifespan did the mission formally invite representatives of local women's organizations for a dialogue. No Acehese women's organizations were invited to the review meetings of the Commission on Security Arrangements that were regularly held between the parties to the peace agreement to review the implementation of the MoU. Further, a study conducted among the Finnish civilian crisis management experts in the AMM, who had undergone gender training prior to their departure for Aceh, revealed that they were divided on the relevance of women's/gender concerns regarding the post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and reconstruction processes: some saw the exclusion of women from the MoU and reintegration programmes as problematic, while others did not, saying they were not sure 'if there had been any [female combatants]' and 'it is painful to strengthen the status of women at this stage. It doesn't bring a[ny] good result[s]'.⁸¹

This confusion, even in some quarters total dismissal of what incorporation of WPS could have brought to the mission's mandate and operative tasks, such as the monitoring of human rights violations, was confirmed in another review of the AMM, which identified lack of context-specific policies and guidelines as a major problem. The caution of the AMM experts was attributed in part to the Islamic context, in part to the imperative of remaining impartial in respect of the conflict dynamics.⁸²

⁷⁶ For a longer discussion on gendered stereotypes, religious piety and the idea that women lack self-control and are therefore a potential source of chaos, and the related concepts of *nafsu* (desires, passions) and *akal* (reason, rationality), see Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*, pp. 103–4.

⁷⁷ Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*, p. 11.

⁷⁸ Lee-Koo, 'Gender at the crossroad of conflict', p. 71; also Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*.

⁷⁹ Lee-Koo, 'Gender at the crossroad of conflict', p. 74.

⁸⁰ Jacqueline Aquino Siapno, 'The politics of reconstruction, gender, and re-integration in post-tsunami Aceh', in Malathi de Alwis and Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, eds, *Tsunami in a time of war: aid, activism and reconstruction in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia* (Colombo: International Center for Ethnic Studies, 2009), pp. 163–90.

⁸¹ Tommi Niemi, 'Reintegration in Aceh Indonesia: opinions of the Finnish civilian crisis management workers about the reintegration in Aceh', *CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies* 2: 4, 2009, p. 16. See also recent analysis of gender sensitivity of Finnish support for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy missions in Anne Mäki-Rahkola and Johanna Suhonen, 'Gendered civilian crisis management: troubleshooting CSDP missions', *CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies* 5: 1, 2014.

⁸² Crisis Management Initiative, *Building peace in Aceh: observations on the work of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM)*

This reluctance to engage with gender and Islam, and the assumption that inaction ensures impartiality, echoes the code of conduct of those humanitarian aid organizations that implemented post-tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction projects in Aceh: only a few had the capacity—and political will—to discuss women's rights and gender concerns from the perspective of Islam, and very few seemed to be aware of the already existing local regulations and Indonesian national guidance on gender mainstreaming and how to make use of them in the post-conflict context. The Indonesian government had endorsed its presidential instruction on gender mainstreaming in 2000, leading to establishment of the Bureau for Women's Empowerment in Aceh. This bureau had participated in the discussions on the need to implement UNSCR 1325 since 2000 and had actively made use of local Islamic feminist scholarship to produce gender advocacy materials and analytical tools to localize the WPS agenda.⁸³

Thus, with the WPS agenda notably absent from the Helsinki peace negotiations and the formal monitoring mission, the process and its review give no real sense of the decades-long engagement by Acehnese women activists who demanded access to formal peace negotiations and participation in setting the agenda for the new legal frameworks, including the drafting of Islamic criminal law, the transitional justice mechanism, the human rights court and the drafting of the Charter of Rights of Women, launched in 2008.⁸⁴ Although only a few of the Acehnese activists formally frame their engagement with the peacebuilding process in Aceh in terms of the WPS agenda, their efforts are examples of how local activists engage in their own ways with action at the global level and with the actors involved in peacebuilding in Aceh. In fact, the global elites promoting WPS are criticized by Acehnese activists for being unaware of the localized ways in which Acehnese women have engaged with the peace, both at the grassroots level as women responsible for the support of their families and as bearing the practical consequences of the war—without knowing of WPS or UNSCR 1325. In their view, using such abbreviations or references to international law, without locating them in a real-life context, is irrelevant to and discriminatory against processes that have been taking place since the early days of the conflict in Aceh. Hence, the activists' agenda became twofold: demanding inclusion of their continued critical reflections on the gendered consequences of the armed conflict, and voicing their refusal to be reduced to 'oppressed Muslim women' in need of saving by outsiders.⁸⁵

The establishment of a human rights court and a truth and reconciliation commission, articulated in the MoU in 2005, is coming about slowly and in a highly politicized context of internal rivalry between former combatants, the current legislators and government. The local by-law on the truth and reconciliation commission was endorsed by the provincial parliament in 2013, and a selection

and its liaison with local civil society (Helsinki: Crisis Management Initiative, 2006).

⁸³ Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*.

⁸⁴ Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*, pp. 49–50.

⁸⁵ Dina Afrianty, *Women and sharia law in northern Indonesia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Grossmann, 'Women's rights activists and the drafting process of the Islamic criminal law code'; Eka Srimulyani, 'Gender in contemporary Acehnese *dayah*: moving beyond docile agency?', in Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward, eds, *Gender and power in Indonesian Islam: leaders, feminists, Sufis and pesantren selves* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

committee to appoint the commissioners was announced as recently as November 2015, including among its members two prominent female figures, the activist Suraya Kamaruzzaman and the activist and lawyer Samsidar. Yet the WPS agenda cannot be applied in any simple way in support of engendering the ongoing peace process. As Acehese women legal experts and women's rights activists pointed out at the Kathmandu regional consultation for the global study on implementation of UNSCR 1325, both the peace process and the international humanitarian aid operation in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami fuelled severe new forms of political and economic struggle and gendered sexual politics. Instead of tackling structural poverty and discrimination, the focus was on the rhetoric of respectability, Acehese identity and the special autonomy status granted for Aceh that is used by provincial Shari'a and Civil Police Force (Satpol PP dan Wilayahatul Hisbah), village/neighbourhood-based and mass organizations such as Islam Defenders Front (FPI) to target and label immoral women.⁸⁶ As a result, women who have experienced discrimination or violence rarely report it to the authorities, but rather attempt to cope by strengthening their economic independence.⁸⁷

Simultaneously, gendered violence has also been directed at religious, ethnic, gender and sexual minorities, and increasingly also at women human rights defenders and gender studies lecturers. The recent emergence of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia's local campaign 'Aceh for Caliphate' uses Islamist frameworks to discuss women's role in society in combating 'liberal and secular feminism' and, interestingly, also the capitalist economic system. The labelling of activists as 'agents of the West' and the polarization of gender politics have created divisions between women's groups,⁸⁸ resulting in complete withdrawal by some from the global WPS and 'gender debates' in order to provide strategic safe spaces for local activism and action.⁸⁹

Moreover, activists have expressed concerns about the possibility of achieving a gender-sensitive human rights court and truth and reconciliation process. In September 2014, the Acehese provincial parliament endorsed the Islamic criminal law, which includes blatantly discriminatory provisions relating to female victims of sexual violence: a rapist who swears five times that he has not committed rape can be exempted from punishment, and a victim of rape can be accused of adultery, with potential punishment of 80 lashes, if reporting his/her experience without four witnesses.⁹⁰ There has been much criticism from civil society activists of the emphasis over the past decade on moral policing and the 'virtues' of women in the implementation of Islamic law,⁹¹ rather than on tackling the

⁸⁶ For detailed analysis of changing patterns of social control in urban Aceh, see David Kloos, 'Strengthening local leadership. Sharia, customs, and the dynamics of vigilante violence in Aceh' in *Regime change, democracy and Islam: the case of Indonesia* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2013), pp. 202–36.

⁸⁷ Donna Swita Hardiani, 'Aceh and women's rights 10 years after the Helsinki peace settlement', presentation at the seminar 'Peace + 10 years: women and post conflict realities', Helsinki, 10 Nov. 2015.

⁸⁸ Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security, 'Resources', <http://Apwaps.Net/Resources/>; Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*.

⁸⁹ Srimulyani, 'Gender in contemporary Acehese *dayah*'; Jauhola, "'Conversations in silence'".

⁹⁰ Samsidar, "'Qanun jinayat', a test case for Aceh women', *Jakarta Post*, 2 Oct. 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/10/02/qanun-jinayat-a-test-case-aceh-women.html>.

⁹¹ Jauhola, *Post-tsunami reconstruction in Indonesia*.

problems of the political economy, including structural poverty. This has made life in Aceh particularly difficult for unmarried, widowed and divorced women, who are especially vulnerable to sexual policing that has concrete impacts on their lives both economically and psychologically.⁹²

Given the politicized and highly masculinized way of making peace pursued by both the international and local political elites, I finally want to draw attention to what abjected women themselves, when given the opportunity, are capable of. In 2015, several years after most of the internationally funded post-tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction aid was cut off in Aceh, a report was published by a regional Asian multi-organization collaboration set up to develop a participatory action research methodology to address gender-based violence and retribution, justice and healing. This report, entitled *Enduring impunity*,⁹³ takes a strikingly different approach from the dominant short-term and time-bound WPS projects, aiming to develop a participatory methodology that builds on long-term relationships, some that have been built over two decades. The initiative pays specific attention to questions such as what time does for healing, and how struggles both continue and alter over long periods of time. The focus is on life-affirming processes that approach questions of gender-based violence from a holistic perspective of healing, advocacy, empowerment and solidarity, 'so that women survivors become active agents of change, and not simply objects of research'.⁹⁴

No beginning, no end:⁹⁵ is there a way to conclude here?

The adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda has been welcomed by many, feminist scholars included, with enthusiasm in the expectation that it will make a difference to, even change the lives of, women globally. Using the method of 'writing back', this article has criticized the unproblematic use of WPS as a branded peacebuilding tool.

I have shown how the Finnish foreign policy brand has constructed the country as a global problem-solver and peacemaker, drawing on the heteronormative myth of gender equality on the one hand and, on the other, tamed asexual female subjectivity: the 'good woman' as peacebuilder or victim of violence. This construct hides a number of problematic exclusions underpinning the current promotion of WPS. I have argued that by examining two episodes divided both temporally and spatially, the constructions of sexuality and gendered postwar reconstruction experiences in Lapland and Aceh, it is possible to identify logics of sexual ideology with problematic colonial and violent overtones. These include the economic and

⁹² Marjaana Jauhola, 'Scraps of home: social and vernacular memory and politics of disaster humanitarianism in Aceh, Indonesia', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 43: 6, pp. 738–59.

⁹³ Galuh Wandita et al., *Enduring impunity: women surviving atrocities in the absence of justice*, Asia Justice Rights, 2015, <http://asia-ajar.org/2015/11/enduring-impunity-women-surviving-atrocities-in-the-absence-of-justice>, accessed 25 Nov. 2015.

⁹⁴ Wandita et al., *Enduring impunity*, p. vi.

⁹⁵ The phrase is borrowed from the title of a book that gave voice to Sámi knowledge systems, such as the idea of cyclical nomadism: see Elina Helander and Kaarina Kailo, *No beginning, no end: the Sami speak up* (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 1998).

political violence towards the Skolt Sámi produced by postwar reconstruction and modernization, and a prism of neglect of Acehnese women's experiences of war in branding the peace settlement and its implementation as a success. These experiences of being 'written out of history' draw attention to problematic sexualized logics in the WPS agenda.

Such findings demand a decolonization of female sexuality and a recognition of how state-led peacebuilding, or the use of WPS to build a foreign policy brand, may in fact reiterate sexualized and gendered forms of prewar state violence, representing an inability to address sub-state settler-indigenous conflicts, and the promotion of forms of peace settlement that perpetuate these forms of violence rather than addressing their root causes. Those who are 'written out of history' and out of global WPS discourse and who are the abjected of its sexual politics should become its true evaluators.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The author is working on a digital ethnography entitled *Scraps of Hope* (<http://scrapsofhope.info/aceh/>), which will include a 'talking back' documentary with Acehnese women activists reflecting on the MoU in Helsinki at the venue of the signing ceremony of the peace settlement.