Gender in United Nations peacebuilding

A case study of Timor-Leste

Sarah Smith
Abstract

This thesis examines how the United Nations (UN) has incorporated a ‘gender perspective’, as mandated by Security Council Resolutions, into its peacebuilding practices. It does this through an intensive analysis of a single case study: Timor-Leste. Using successive UN missions in Timor-Leste as its focus, the thesis analyses how and why ‘gender’ has come to be part of UN peacebuilding, and how UN gender policies are implemented on the ground, in partnership with the government of Timor-Leste and domestic women’s organisations. The UN as an institution has been at the forefront of defining international peacebuilding, broadly understood as external interventions designed to prevent conflict or a relapse into conflict. Yet a more critical literature has problematised the practice of peacebuilding and its universalist norms of liberal internationalism, characterising the prevailing paradigm as ‘liberal peacebuilding’. This thesis draws on this body of work, especially critical feminist perspectives on the gendered nature of peacebuilding, and offers a gender analysis of the limitations of liberal peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. It does this through a qualitative analysis of the merits and limitations of the UN’s gender policy and outcomes in Timor-Leste. It also conducts an interpretative analysis of the UN’s formal discourse of gender-inclusive peacebuilding. This is contrasted with perspectives from international and national stakeholders (n=36) involved in implementing gender policy in Timor-Leste. Though it focuses on Timor-Leste, the thesis examines broader questions relating to how gender is understood in international peacebuilding missions and post-conflict reconstruction.

The research question is addressed in three stages. First, the thesis examines the external dimension of incorporating a gender perspective into UN peacebuilding: that is, the prevailing policies of women’s empowerment and protection employed in liberal peacebuilding. It is argued that while these goals are necessary, policy responses on the ground implement only a narrow understanding of each. Second, it is argued that incorporating a gender perspective into UN peacebuilding results in a particular ‘gendering’ process, in which UN gender policy imposes its own set of normative gender conceptions. It is argued that these policies contain gendered assumptions about what women can do or should do in post-conflict reconstruction. Third, it analyses East Timorese women’s organisations and their work at the coalface between international ‘gender norms’ and the domestic population. As in other post-conflict contexts, women’s organisations in Timor-Leste acted as vehicles to implement gender policy and socialise gender norms. It is argued that the process of partnering with successive UN peacebuilding missions had both positive and negative effects on women’s organisations in Timor-Leste. While the UN’s presence provided support for women’s advocacy around certain issues, it constrained activism over others. Moreover, there were negative implications for how some East Timorese women’s organisations were viewed by the broader population. As a result,
their work with successive UN missions affected how these organisations could achieve their goals. Further, while women’s organisations were vehicles to deliver UN gender policies, they also demonstrated agency, shaping gender policy through sustained advocacy.

This thesis reveals limitations in the ways a gender perspective is conceptualised and practiced in UN peacebuilding, and highlights institutional limitations in implementing gender policy. It is argued that gender in liberal peacebuilding represents a particular cultural framework, not a neutral set of uncontested standards. It is also argued that the incorporation of a gender perspective into UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste was poorly connected to women’s pre-existing activism around rights and equality. The thesis concludes by reflecting on what the Timor-Leste case study can tell us about the incorporation of gender perspectives into UN peacebuilding more broadly. The issues raised in Timor-Leste provide pertinent lessons for how gender is understood and practiced in international peace operations, and what this means for women’s organising, women’s empowerment and women’s security in post-conflict settings.
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To my family, and to the Pirrett sisters, thank you. I would like to extend a special thank you to Joel Broad who gave, without reservation, his support and love to me, to this project and to all my endeavours. All of you have offered unwavering support and are a source of strength, love and friendship.

Finally but by no means least I would like to acknowledge the feminist activists and scholars who have come before me, without whose work and dedication I would have no language to write in.

This thesis has been copyedited and proofread in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP). Copyediting and proofreading was undertaken by Katie Poidomani of Edge Editing. No corrections or advice on the substance or structure of the thesis was offered as part of this service, in accordance with Part C of the ASEP.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

To the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

Where the work is based on joint research or publications, this thesis discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.

Signature: ........................................

Date: ........................................
# Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APSC-TL</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Support Collective Timor-Leste</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAVR</td>
<td>Comissão de Acolhimento, Verda de e Reconciliação - Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNRT</td>
<td>Conselho Nacional da Reconstrução Timorense – National Congress of Timorese Reconstruction (political party established 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVAW</td>
<td>Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPKO</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALINTIL</td>
<td>Armed forces for the National Liberation of East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDTL</td>
<td>East Timor Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-FDTL</td>
<td>Falintil-Forças Armadas de Defesa de Timor-Leste – FALINTIL-Defence forces of Timor-Leste</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOKUPERS</td>
<td>Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Lorosae – East Timorese Women’s Communications Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRETILIN</td>
<td>Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAU</td>
<td>Gender Affairs Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender Responsive Budgeting</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InterFET</td>
<td>International Force in East Timor</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Joint Assessment Mission</td>
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<td>JMP</td>
<td>Judicial System Monitoring Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>LADV</td>
<td>Law Against Domestic Violence (Timor-Leste)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malae</td>
<td>Foreigner (Tetun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMT</td>
<td>Organização da Mulher Timorense – Organisation of East Timorese Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPE</td>
<td>Office for the Promotion of Equality (Timor-Leste)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPMT</td>
<td>Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense – Popular Organisation of East Timorese Women (Women’s wing of Fretilin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBC</td>
<td>Peacebuilding Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNTL</td>
<td>Policia Nacional Timor-Leste – National Police Timor-Leste</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKO</td>
<td>Peacekeeping Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSO</td>
<td>Peace Support Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (the acronym used by the UN for incidences of peacekeeper misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPI</td>
<td>Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRSR</td>
<td>Special Representative of the Secretary-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security sector reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suco</td>
<td>Village (Tetun)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCCs</td>
<td>Troop Contributing Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNI</td>
<td>Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Indonesian military</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMET</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in East Timor</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMIR</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
UNGA   United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women
(now UN Women)
UNMIBH United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
UNMIK United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISET United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNMIT United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNOTIL United Nations Office in Timor-Leste
UNPOL United Nations Police (formerly CIVPOL)
UNSC United Nations Security Council
UNTAET United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UN Women United Nations Development Fund for Women (formerly UNIFEM)
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1: Introduction

This thesis analyses how the United Nations (UN) conceptualises and practices a ‘gender perspective’ in its peace operations. It examines the way gender policy operates on the ground in peacebuilding using successive UN peacebuilding missions in post-occupation Timor-Leste (from 1999 to 2012) as its case study. The thesis is grounded in existing feminist security studies and feminist international relations literature, which has a rich history of critically engaging with the intersections and interactions between gender, war, women, militarism, violence, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding (Ackerly & True 2006; Sjoberg 2010). These bodies of work foreground the importance of gender and women to understanding war and peace as well as highlighting the blindness of traditional security approaches to both (Sjoberg 2010). Gendered relations are increasingly understood as an essential consideration in peacebuilding processes by international institutions, and the issue was firmly embedded as an essential part of UN peace operations by the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000.1 Resolution 1325 mandated that a ‘gender perspective’ be incorporated into all UN peace operations with especial attention paid to advancing women’s role in peacebuilding and supporting women’s empowerment and security in post-conflict reconstruction.

Yet how gender is conceptualised and practiced in peacebuilding by the UN has important implications for women’s empowerment, women’s security and women’s organising in post-conflict settings. Fundamental to adopting a gender perspective in peacebuilding are the twin approaches of gender mainstreaming, which assesses the gendered implications of all policy in both design and implementation; and gender balancing, which seeks equal representation of women and men in decision making structures, both within and outside the UN. While these goals are laudable their implementation has been ad hoc and questions over whether women’s empowerment and security are adequately addressed in peacebuilding remain (Pratt & Richter-Devroe 2011; Binder, Lukas & Schweiger 2008; Hudson 2013; Olsson & Gizelis 2013). There is often uneven distribution of peacebuilding benefits, meaning not all women will benefit equally from the gender component of peacebuilding. In addition, the extent to which an approach dominated by bureaucratic rigidity can support different forms of feminist activism has been called into question (Al-Ali & Pratt 2009a, 2009b; Gibbings 2011). In essence, ‘gender’ in liberal peacebuilding represents a particular framework that is itself both gendered and gendering, and is not a neutral set of uncontested standards.

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1 Gender relations, as defined by Paul Higate and Marsha Henry (2004, 482 n5), are “interactions between and among women and men that are characterized by negotiation, bargaining and exchange between different actors with different access to economic, political and social power.”
This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology as well as the arguments contained within the thesis. It provides historical context of the case-study, Timor-Leste, its violent occupation period and the lead up to eventual UN intervention, which ultimately led to 13 years of UN involvement in the territory. This thesis focuses on the actions and activities of the UN as it has sought to define the practice of peacebuilding (Call 2008a, 6). The UN has also been central to the developments of international gender norms via their international conferences on women, held in the second half of the twentieth century, and which brought to life feminist agendas in platforms like the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122) relate specifically to considerations of gender and women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. These resolutions are fundamental to the way in which the gender component of peacebuilding is conceived of and practiced.

This thesis suggests limitations in how gender is conceptualised and practiced in UN peace support operations. Throughout this thesis gender refers to the socially, culturally and politically constructed and constitutive assumptions attached to women and men based on perceived gender dichotomies, and which produce a “gendered social life” (Harding 1986, 17-18). There is not one single conception of gender but many that are negotiated, inscribed and reproduced in multiple fashions: through day-to-day interactions, through national and international political discourse, in institutions and by individuals. Consequently, this thesis critiques the notion of gender blind peacebuilding theory and argues that theories that do not adequately consider gender do not provide sufficient understandings of post-conflict peacebuilding socio-political landscapes. In addition it is argued that beyond the understanding that peacebuilding is gendered – that is, it is constituted by gendered identities – it is also ‘gendering’ in that peacebuilding reproduces dualistic understandings of gendered subjects (Shepherd 2010, 76). These theoretical frameworks are drawn out in the following chapters and are examined in tandem with situated empirical analysis of the case of Timor-Leste. What the empirical data highlights is that while peacebuilding is both gendered and gendering, as was evident in Timor-Leste, the importance of acknowledging agency in national and local actors is also essential in understanding post-conflict peacebuilding contexts. What this means is that domestic populations are not simply subjects to gendered peacebuilding, but that they also actively work towards and articulate their goals in terms of rights and equality.
Research design and methodology

Since its inception in October 1945 the UN has undertaken various attempts at preventing conflict and rebuilding post-conflict societies. As its peacebuilding forays have grown, the term ‘liberal peacebuilding’ has been applied to its efforts, as the form of peacebuilding has adopted the hallmarks of instituting a liberal democratic state: democratisation, rule of law, human rights and a free and globalised market (Richmond 2006; Newman, Paris & Richmond 2009; Richmond & Franks 2009; Heathershaw 2008a). Since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000 on Women, Peace and Security, these peacebuilding missions have sought to incorporate a ‘gender perspective’ with the connected aims of improving women’s representation in peace processes and as personnel in peacebuilding missions, as well as empowering and protecting women in the post-conflict reconstruction of host states (UNSC 2000a). The post-conflict context can bring opportunities for justice and reconciliation, an end to impunity and the reformation of the state (Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012, 9). Fundamentally the post-conflict environment, as with the conflict environment, is gendered and policymakers increasingly understand that a gender lens is necessary in surveying the post-conflict landscape (Ní Aoláin, Haynes & Cahn 2011, 5).

In evaluating the UN’s approach to gender throughout successive missions in Timor-Leste, this thesis uses the term ‘peacebuilding’ consistent with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ (DPKO) own guidelines, known as the Capstone Doctrine (DPKO 2008). The Capstone Doctrine defines peacebuilding as a “range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict” (DPKO 2008, 18). I use the term peacebuilding as it is better able to capture the array of tasks undertaken by successive UN peace operations in Timor-Leste, even though in practice the DPKO refers to its missions as ‘peacekeeping’. The term peacebuilding includes the peacekeeping elements of each mission, also consistent with the Capstone Doctrine, with peacekeeping referring to the military, police and civilian elements “working together to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace” (DPKO 2008, 18). The term peacebuilding also captures the evolution of peacekeeping to ever broadening tasks associated with state- and nation-building, an evolution which has, importantly, included increasing discourse on the necessity of incorporating a gender perspective into UN peace operations. In academic literature, ‘liberal peacebuilding’ is used to refer to contemporary peacekeeping undertaken by the UN, as well as UN agencies and other international non-government organisations (INGOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs), and which reflects the ideological underpinnings of evolving UN peace operations.

2 The DPKO headed every mission in Timor-Leste except UNAMET and UNOTIL, discussed later.
Since the 1990s, the UN has sought to refine and improve its peace operations, which has included a gender component. Timor-Leste offers an interesting case study in terms of how expanding peacebuilding functions have incorporated gender and how it has been operationalised, interacted with and perceived on the ground in a specific context, as UN intervention in the territory was launched just as nascent conceptions of a ‘gender perspective’ were being incorporated into the UN’s peacebuilding practices. The research was designed to examine how successive UN peacebuilding missions have sought to incorporate a gender perspective and, ideally, improve gender relations in the process. The single case study approach was also taken to pay more attention to the domestic context and better document the perspectives of national stakeholders on UN gender policy. The specific objectives of this thesis are to: document the experience and views of staff engaged in peacebuilding missions in Timor-Leste; to compare East Timorese perspectives with those of UN policy and practice in regards to gender in peacebuilding missions; and assess the relationship between internal policy objectives regarding gender in peacebuilding and the external ‘on-the-ground’ outcomes, especially in relation to women’s organising and activism.

These objectives are addressed through a two-fold approach. Firstly, formal equality measures – for example, gender mainstreaming and gender balancing – have been advanced within UN peacebuilding activities over the last decade. I therefore examine the process of these technical approaches to gender and women and assess whether they are adequate implementations to improve women’s post-war empowerment and security. The second approach examines engagement between the UN missions in Timor-Leste and the women’s movement in Timor-Leste. In practice this meant its engagement with national, urban-based women’s organisations, as these were the key interlocutors between UN peacebuilding and the domestic population in the UN’s efforts to disseminate international gender norms. The implications of this relationship, and the attention paid to the national sphere, are discussed throughout the thesis.

A case study was selected in order to deepen the empirical contributions of the research and to consider the importance of context. Peacebuilding does not occur in a vacuum and is a lived experience for its ‘recipients’. Using a single case study design provided me with the opportunity to examine UN gender policy in a particular context over a number of successive UN peacebuilding missions (Timor-Leste was host to five peace operations, four of which are considered in this thesis). Producing contextual knowledge is a stated benefit of using a case study research approach (Yin 2009; Flyvberg 2011). A single case study design also meant that multiple areas relevant to a gender analysis and supported in the literature could be examined, including women’s empowerment and protection in Timor-Leste, the gendered rhetoric of UN peacebuilding, and resistance to gender programs in the case of Timor-Leste.
The empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews was used to test existing theories in the literature regarding peacebuilding and gender in the UN system. Relevant theoretical considerations on incorporating gender into peacebuilding include whether ‘mainstreaming a gender perspective’ can mitigate or alleviate gender inequalities in a domestic context, essentially its transformative potential (Krook & True 2012); post-colonial perspectives which suggest that the gender component of international interventions supports colonial ideations and at worst can undermine gender equality and human rights (El-Kassem 2008; Al-Ali & Pratt 2009a, 2009b; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2007; Coomaraswamy 2002); and that gender discourse within peacebuilding practice itself reinforces normative hierarchical gender conceptions, that is, it too has a gendering function (Hudson 2012a; MacKenzie 2010; Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012; Schirch 2012; Shepherd 2011).

The research project included two fieldwork periods (in 2012 and 2013) totalling six months in Timor-Leste to conduct formal interviews with key stakeholders. Interviews were also conducted in Melbourne and via Skype with those no longer based in Timor-Leste. Interview participants were selected on the basis of their role in UN peacebuilding missions in Timor-Leste, UN agencies in Timor-Leste, national and international NGOs, government departments, and other interested parties, such as academics and researchers in Timor-Leste. The method of sampling used was ‘snowball sampling’ (Cohen & Arieli 2011, 426-29); that is, potential participants were identified through connections or initial contacts made. This was a useful method of sampling as it was difficult to identify participants from a distance and the individuals taking on particular roles were often transient. A total of 32 interviews were conducted with 36 participants. Two group interviews were conducted with key informants (Payne & Payne 2004, 103-104). Both group discussions were conducted with colleagues from a particular unit, one within a national NGO and one within a government ministry. Each group interview had three participants each. Through semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their work in peacebuilding processes in Timor-Leste and reflect on the perceived merits and limitations on the way peacebuilding processes have been implemented, drawing on both their practical and theoretical knowledge (See Appendices 1, 2 and 3).

Participant interviews were an important part of the research design in order to gather knowledge that “only those with certain experiences can know” (Ackerly & True 2010, 168). In 3 These are referenced as group interviews (see Appendix 2) reflecting group perspectives, rather than individual perspectives, even where an individual participant may be quoted. This is consistent with Payne and Payne’s (2004, 104) contention that group interviews can gather the “underlying opinions [and] feelings…that members already have, and which are expressed, amplified and possibly modified through the collective interaction in the group.” In short, the group dynamic can shape participant discussion, and thus reference to the interview as a group is warranted.
case study research, a commonly cited weakness is that a case study is selected to find what the researcher sets out to find; in essence, they can lend themselves to confirming researcher bias (Yin 2012, 6; Flyvberg 2011, 309). A semi-structured interview design was used as a way to overcome such a weakness, in order for interview participants to reveal how they think about situations under consideration and “construct their reality” (Yin 2012, 12). Qualitative tools and analysis, such as participant interviews, can link concepts to the “practice, perception, and interpretation of those concepts” by those who are under consideration (Jacoby 2006, 156). Those national women’s organisations that had a good working knowledge of either working with the UN or advocating through them were targeted.

In designing the research project, the aim was to speak to a wide variety of individuals and organisations, especially individuals within the UN system to best understand how gender policies shape their day-to-day work. In practice this meant being directed to ‘gender focal points’ or gender units, to women’s organisations or to individual prominent women in Timor-Leste. Members of government outside of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) seemed particularly disinterested in engaging in conversation about gender or how it informed the day-to-day of the Government of Timor-Leste. Interestingly, during this period I was also directed to speak to some well-known East Timorese men who are advocates for women’s rights in Timor-Leste. Although the term gender remains overwhelmingly associated with women and advocacy for gender equality is clearly thought of as women’s work, it was interesting that men could potentially now be seen as partners in this work.

Empirical data gathered during fieldwork was triangulated with UN reports and documents where available. Both of these sources are used as evidence throughout the thesis. Triangulation is a common method of analysis in single case study research as it utilises multiple data sources or “observations” when the units of analysis are few (Ackerly & True 2010, 186). In addition to triangulation, empirical data and documents from the specific Timor-Leste case study were compared to other cases. Comparison (Ackerly & True 2010, 188-89) facilitated the ability of the case study design to provide implications for the development of gender work in UN peacebuilding more generally. Importantly, and consistent with current trends in critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding (Futamura & Notaras 2011), this research balances the institutional perspective of the UN with individuals on the ground, both working within the UN and East Timorese nationals who work with, experience, and live the context of post-occupation peacebuilding missions.

The process of identifying themes in the primary research was driven by the themes and priorities in the UN’s implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in its
peacebuilding activities. This approach was taken in order to ensure the empirical data was as translatable as possible to UN gender policy in Timor-Leste and to UN peacebuilding more generally. Framing the empirical data in a similar fashion to the priorities of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (for example, using the organising frameworks of women’s empowerment and women’s protection) meant that the two bodies of research data could more easily ‘speak’ to each other. Using a feminist research ethic further meant that data collected from multiple sources was given the same consideration or weight. As Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True (2010, 179) note, a feminist research ethic “demands that we apply the same criteria to the analysis of documents from institutional or elite sources as from lower-status organizations, groups or individuals.” This supports a key aim of feminist researchers to privilege the previously marginalised experience of women in international relations and security as challenging to what is argued to be the partial view of traditional or dominant international relations and security theory.

Rather than an explicitly ‘feminist’ research method the project adapted existing methods to examine the data “through the lens of feminist theory” (Ackerly & True 2010, 163). As Ackerly and True (2010, 162-63) argue the term ‘feminist methods’ is too vague to give meaning on its own, or to indicate what to do and how to do it in research. In short, there are multiple possible feminist approaches just as there are feminist subjects (Shepherd 2010, 4). I aim to contribute to critical debates of the gendered nature of peace, which includes critical engagement with ‘gender’ in peacebuilding. The empirical work of feminist international relations and security studies scholars has rethought concepts such as war, peace and security and has made ontological and epistemological contributions to critical perspectives in both international relations and security studies (Ackerly & True 2006, 242-43).

An important distinction to be noted here is between the advocacy agenda that led to the adoption of Resolution 1325, and the implementation and interpretation of this agenda. Cynthia Enloe (2005, 281) has argued that the feminist perspective that informed Resolution 1325 was that “patriarchy, in all its forms, is a principal cause both of the outbreak of violent societal conflicts and of the international community’s frequent failures in providing long term resolutions to those violent conflicts.” Although this was the activism that led to the adoption of Women, Peace and Security resolutions by the Security Council, this perspective has not come out clearly in the policy designs and implementations that have followed. Implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda through successive resolutions has not itself led to a radical rethink of the way that security is sought within and between states. In examining this gap between rhetoric and reality, I argue that “deep-seated gendered social hierarchies” (Hall & True 2009, 159) also exist within the norms of the international community and peacebuilding
missions, and that the nature of the missions themselves and the social structure they propagate
must also be analysed, not simply ‘traditional’ or ‘local’ culture or customs. Even at a logistical
level the wording of international resolutions and conventions on women and gender are hotly
debated and contested (Merry 2003).

As with any research project, there are limitations to the research design and there is data that
could not be collected with the interview design and participant cohort. In particular the primary
research does not give insight into the ‘grass-roots’ or day-to-day negotiations regarding gender
relations in Timor-Leste, nor how these may vary across geographical locations. This thesis
does not present ethnographic evidence on gender conceptions and identities in Timor-Leste nor
draw causal links between UN gender policies and the day-to-day lived experience of gendered
relations in Timor-Leste. Rather than attempt to establish a causal link or comment on the
intentions of policymakers, the thesis analyses how the gender component of UN peacebuilding
operated and the implications it had for some women’s organising and activities in the specific
case of post-occupation Timor-Leste. Moreover, I argue that the analyses presented here provide
important insights into how gender and women are conceptualised in international security
discourse and consequently incorporated into international peace operations.

Another limitation is the positionality of the researcher and this was perhaps the most palpable
to me during the research project. As a feminist researcher I have at times been concerned with
researching both from and about a gender perspective. A recurrent thought was that I myself
was ‘gendering’ women, especially East Timorese women, by presenting their knowledge and
experiences from a gender lens; essentially that I was fixing ‘gender’ to women and
representing gender or a gendered experience as women’s experience, ignoring their important
contributions in other ‘non-gendered’ areas such as the economic, political, social and cultural
situation in Timor-Leste. I believe in part this represents the idiosyncrasies of gender policies
and gender work within UN peacebuilding, in which gender is used as both a noun and a verb,
not problematic in itself (see Eveline & Bacchi 2005), with little acknowledgement of
subjectivity and intersectionality. For example, I was consistently directed to speak to women’s
organisations and individual women when seeking experience and knowledge on UN gender
policies and how they were incorporated into the day-to-day actions of multiple units. This is
despite the aim of gender mainstreaming to be to assess gendered implications throughout the
design and implementation of all policy. In researching this thesis I needed to step back and
disentangle the messiness of using a gender lens on gender policies and the multiple and varied
platforms from which the subjective nature of gender could be analysed.
**Timor-Leste: occupation and UN intervention**

The case study for this thesis is Timor-Leste. This case was selected as UN intervention in Timor-Leste came at a pivotal time in terms of both the evolution of peacebuilding and of international norms on gender and women’s equality. As such, it is necessary to provide an overview of Timor-Leste’s history. Formerly East Timor, the country comprises the eastern half of the island of Timor, situated north-west of Australia. The western half, West Timor, is a province of Indonesia. Timor-Leste is made up of thirteen districts, including Oecusse, an exclave on the north coast of West Timor and the original base of the Portuguese colonial administration. Whereas West Timor, along with the rest of the Indonesian archipelago, was colonised by the Dutch, Timor-Leste was colonised by the Portuguese, who came to the island as early as 1514, establishing the first settlement there 50 years later (Dunn 2003, 13). James Fox (2000, 1) describes the entire Timor Island, both east and west, as a diverse landscape peopled by a diverse population, and is therefore “not one place but many.” He further notes particularly that the local populations have historically resisted outside interference and have protected their local cultures and traditions.

Timor-Leste was a small and neglected outpost of Portugal’s colonial empire, providing little in the way of monetary or geographic gains besides excellent trade in sandalwood. Portuguese rule is said to have exacerbated local political tensions through a style of indirect rule, inserting themselves into local political arrangements; for example, using village chiefs to collect taxes (McWilliam & Traube 2011; Jolliffe 1978, 48; Dunn 2003). During WWII, Allied and Japanese troops battled for Timor-Leste, with East Timorese providing invaluable support to Allied forces. Four hundred Australian troops, with support from local East Timorese, managed to keep at bay roughly 20,000 Japanese troops with the loss of only 40 Australian men (Hill 1976, 2). Following Australia’s withdrawal from the territory, the local population suffered grave humanitarian consequences under Japanese military occupation, with the loss of 40,000 East Timorese lives, compounded by Japanese resentment of East Timorese support to Allied forces (Hill 1976, 2; Dunn 2003, 19-24). Japanese occupation of the territory continued until the territory was surrendered in 1945, subsequently returning to Portuguese colonialists (Dunn 2003, 19-24). On the western side of the island, the end of Japanese occupation in Indonesia and West Timor led to Indonesia gaining its independence at the end of WWII. Timor-Leste remained a Portuguese colony until 1974 when political events in Portugal led to rapid decolonisation.

Following an overthrow of Portugal’s monarchy in 1910, a right wing dictatorship, the Estado Novo (‘new state’), was established in 1926 under Antonio Salazar who headed the state until
1968. Salazar was “ideologically and culturally traditional, anti-liberal, Catholic [and] ultra-conservative”, rejecting democracy and instituting a dictatorial regime (Pinto & Rezola 2007, 358). As Western Europe boomed in the 1960s and 1970s, Portugal’s economy stagnated (Story 1976). The Estado Novo ignored growing demands for decolonisation from its overseas territories, which included Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau, as well as Timor-Leste. On 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) overthrew the Salazar regime in a coup d’état which became known as the Carnation Revolution, bringing an end to years of dictatorship and beginning Portugal’s development into democracy. Portugal’s armed forces had overthrown the regime partly because it did not believe in Portugal’s stalling of decolonisation in Africa and refused to fight in the resultant wars (Story 1976, 421). In Timor-Leste, the Carnation Revolution began a process of decolonisation and political parties began to form over differing ideological positions on Timor-Leste’s future status (Hill 1976; Jolliffe 1978; Dunn 2003, 45-65).

One of these political groupings, the Associação Social Democratica de Timor (ASDT – Social Democratic Association of Timor), would later become FRETILIN, which was (and remains) symbolic of East Timorese resistance to Indonesian occupation and constituted the pro-independence front. There were other political groups, favouring either continuing ties with Portugal, integration with Indonesia or an autonomous status within Indonesia. The União Democratica Timorese (UDT – Timorese Democratic Union) initially favoured continuing links with Portugal whereas the Associação Popular Democratica Timorense (APODETI) favoured integration with Indonesia (Hill 1976). The Indonesian Suharto Government at the time had gained power on the back of an anti-communist coup and the massacres of large numbers of suspected communists and their supporters in 1965 and 1966 (Candio & Bleiker 2001, 67). This fact crucially gained support for Indonesia from the US and its allies given the international context of the Cold War and the perceived threat of communism. Leading up to their military occupation of Timor-Leste, Indonesia had been establishing a pretext for the invasion by purporting that FRETILIN represented potential communist leadership in Timor-Leste (Candio & Bleiker 2001, 65; CAVR 2005a, section 3.6).

**Indonesian occupation and the resistance struggle**

Following a brief union between FRETILIN and UDT, and an also brief civil conflict between those same parties – and sensing imminent Indonesian invasion – FRETILIN claimed the independence of Timor-Leste on 28 November 1975. Just days after, on 7 December 1975, Indonesia launched an assault on the capital Dili and subsequently gained control of the territory (see Jolliffe 1978, 1-11). The UN, although largely impotent, did not condone the invasion,
stating the Indonesian incursion was against the principles of the UN Charter and the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination (UNSC 1975) and reiterated this again in 1976 with another Security Council resolution calling for withdrawal of Indonesian forces from the territory. The UN General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions on Timor-Leste throughout Indonesian occupation, although General Assembly resolutions are not binding on member states like those of the Security Council (Maley 2000, 64-65). From the 1980s however interest in Timor-Leste waned and “Australia played an active role in thwarting the General Assembly discussion of the issue” (Maley 2000, 65). The international community did little and indeed was largely complicit in Indonesia’s initial invasion and the following decades of oppressive occupation in Timor-Leste. Australia in particular had knowledge of the imminent invasion although continued to deny this publicly despite having intelligence on Indonesian incursion into the western border regions of the country and the subsequent killing of five Australian journalists (Ball 2001). As an ally in the anti-communist camp of Cold War international relations, the international community tacitly supported Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste, with Australia recognising Indonesian sovereignty over the area, which was reinforced by subsequent Australian governments (Ball 2001).

The occupation period, which ended in 1999, was marred by oppressive military tactics, disenfranchisement of the East Timorese population, large-scale internal displacement and widespread human rights violations. Upper estimates of the result of the repressive and violent occupation are nearly 200,000 East Timorese deaths (Candio & Bleiker 2001, 66). The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR – Commissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação) established in Timor-Leste in independence, reported the military strategy of the occupation regime:

Once committed to military intervention, ABRI4 [which was later to become TNI5] was dominant during the early years of the occupation: by increasing military violence they sought to achieve the political objectives of pacification and integration. To do this, they brought the conflict to every level of East Timorese society, involving East Timorese men, women and children in combat, intelligence torture and killings to control the population. By the late 1980s, when full-scale military conflict shifted to clandestine resistance…the military again sought violent solutions to the problem. Death squads and paramilitaries in the mid-1990s became forerunners to the widespread militias formed in 1998-1999 (CAVR 2005a, section 4.1, para 1).

4 Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia).
5 Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia).
East Timorese resistance to the military occupation and the fight for independence also followed different stages. From occupation until the late 1970s and early 1980s, resistance was structured into bases de apoio (‘bases of resistance’). After the initial invasion, FRETILIN, its armed wing FALINTIL, and large numbers of East Timorese fled the country’s mountainous interior, thus leading FRETILIN to organise those areas that remained under its control into six administrative sections, the bases de apoio (CAVR 2005a, section 5.2; da Silva 2012). This period came to an end following massive Indonesian military offensives, only possible with US military weaponry supply (Pilger 1994; da Silva 2012, 201), and was succeeded by a period of clandestine resistance. From the mid-1980s the military situation was stalemated with Indonesian military controlling Timor-Leste’s population centres and FALINTIL working in small units with links to the underground resistance network, a vital network that provided a means of communication and transport for medicine, food, goods and people (Pinto & Jardine 1997). The resistance movement can be grouped into three fronts: the armed front, the clandestine resistance, and the diplomatic front. International connections with resistance fronts were maintained throughout the occupation period, especially amongst a network of diaspora in Mozambique, Australia, Indonesia and the US. Perhaps the most well-known face of the diplomatic front was Jose Ramos Horta, who continually lobbied the UN and its member states to support Timor-Leste’s goal of self-determination.

From the 1990s the international political climate began to shift. Indonesia was increasingly urged to hold a referendum on the question of Timor-Leste’s future. Indonesia’s footing in Timor-Leste began to erode (Maley 2000, 66-67). The security situation in Timor-Leste however remained ominous with Indonesian military backed militia violently repressing internal demands for independence. Indonesia and Australia repeatedly claimed that the militia were actually East Timorese formed groups who wanted integration with Indonesia, rather than the Indonesian military created and supported proxies they were (Ball 2001; Candio & Bleiker 2001). Key events in Timor-Leste also brought international attention to the issue and to the question of Timor-Leste’s future. In 1991, the Santa Cruz massacre occurred in which hundreds of peaceful protesters gathering at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili were fired upon by Indonesian armed forces. The presence of two international journalists, Amy Goodman and Allan Nairn, who managed to take and smuggle out footage of the massacre (only after being attacked by military personnel themselves) meant brutal footage of the massacre was internationally publicised and criticised.

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6 Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor).
7 The sectors were: ponta-leste (far east); centro-leste (central east); centro-norte (central north); centro-sul (central south); fronteira-sul (border south); and fronteira norte (border north).
UN intervention and peace operations in Timor-Leste

Despite the security situation, when an agreement was signed between the UN, Indonesia and Portugal on 5 May 1999 (UNGA & UNSC 1999) which stated that a referendum would be held to determine the future status of the country, Indonesia was charged with the responsibility of maintaining security during the ballot. The 5 May Agreement outlined a framework for ‘special autonomy’ for Timor-Leste within the Indonesian Republic, a framework that was to be put to the East Timorese population for consideration. There was no precedent for the UN conducting a vote under such circumstances “with an abundance of spoilers and no credible security guarantees” (Maley 2000, 67-68). As part of the agreement, the UN was to establish a support mission in Timor-Leste to facilitate the popular consultation. The UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established in June 1999, with the popular consultation proposed for 8 August 1999. The UNAMET mandate set out provisions for: civilian police officers to advise Indonesian police officers and to supervise ballot boxes; military liaison offices to maintain contact with Indonesian armed forces; a political component to monitor and assess the fairness of the referendum; an electoral component for voter registration; and an information component to explain to the East Timorese population the terms of the referendum and the proposed autonomy framework (UNSC 1999a).

If the proposed framework were accepted then the UN would initiate the “procedures necessary for the removal of East Timor from the list of Non-Self Governing Territories…and the deletion of the question of East Timor from the agendas of the Security Council and General Assembly” (UNGA & UNSC 1999). If the majority vote rejected the framework of special autonomy within Indonesia, the Government of Indonesia was to terminate its links with the territory and arrangements were to be made for a “peaceful and orderly transfer of authority in East Timor to the United Nations” (UNGA & UNSC 1999). Thus from 1999 the groundwork was laid for the potential of continued UN involvement in the development of Timor-Leste.

The results of the ballot, eventually held on 30 August 1999, were decisive. Of Timor-Leste’s eligible voting population, 75 per cent rejected the proposed autonomy framework. The Indonesian military and militia response to the vote was violent and swift, following a pre-determined ‘scorched earth’ policy. The response was the culmination of months of intimidation and violence that had been building throughout 1999 (see Dunn 2001). According to Australian intelligence documents, Australia was aware of the plan should the referendum go in favour of independence:
The Australian intelligence agencies were able to provide the government with a ringside seat at the mass killings and forced deportations...though the level of destruction and the scale of the deportations were beyond their worst predictions (Ball 2001, 53-54).

UNAMET had neither the mandate nor capacity to play a protective role, or cope with the levels of violence following the consultation. UNAMET’s small size and mandate saw it subject to the same oppressive environment of Indonesian military occupation and militia presence. UNAMET offices were attacked and staff were sieged inside the Dili-based UN compound after the referendum result was announced (Martin 2000). Numerous accounts characterise the final days of UNAMET as ones of fear for the international and local staff, particularly when the mission was instructed to withdraw international staff, leaving local staff to an almost certain death (Martinkus 2001; Cristalis 2009). In September 1999, a multinational Australian-led peacekeeping force was authorised by the UN Security Council: the International Force for East Timor (InterFET). InterFET was mandated with supporting UNAMET and is viewed as largely successful in responding to the immediate security situation in Timor-Leste. InterFET, authorised on 15 September 1999, was a multinational military operation that aimed to quickly bring the security situation under control, prevent militia incursions across the border with West Timor and provide emergency humanitarian services where possible. In the mandate that authorised InterFET (UNSC 1999b), the UN Security Council welcomed the organisation of a transitional administration that would eventually incorporate this peacekeeping force. In October 1999 UNAMET was replaced with the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) under which InterFET was eventually subsumed.

UNTAET was, and remains, one of the most far-reaching mandates of a Security Council peace operation. It represents a watershed moment for the development of comprehensive integrated peacebuilding missions, beyond the realm of traditional peacekeeping, incorporating security, development, and state- and nation-building goals. UNTAET came under the authority of the DPKO and is thus institutionally defined as peacekeeping, yet its mandate and role took on key functions of peacebuilding, state-building, and development agendas. There was little precedent for a mission the same size and scope as UNTAET, although a handful of transitional administrations have been undertaken elsewhere (Bellamy & Williams 2010, 255-78). The transitional administration in Kosovo, UNMIK, became an unofficial model and development plan for UNTAET (Conflict, Security & Development Group 2003, para iv; Chesterman 2002, 62; Lemay-Hebert 2011, 192-93). Indeed the wording of the Security Council’s Resolution 1272, UNTAET’s establishing mandate, is almost identical to UNMIK/REG/1999/1 (UNMIK
1999), which endowed each mission respectively with executive sovereign authority over the territories in which they were established to build peace.

For its duration, UNTAET held executive and legislative authority over Timor-Leste, with power essentially centralised in the hands of the ‘transitional administrator’, the Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) the late Sergio Vieira de Mello. Security Council Resolution 1272 (UNSC 1999c) allowed de Mello, as transitional administrator, to enact new laws and regulations and to amend, suspend or repeal existing ones. UNTAET also worked in close partnership with the World Bank, with the bank taking responsibility for spending on development and reconstruction (La’o Hamutuk 2000). As Timor-Leste was not an independent country until 2002, the World Bank instead granted funds via UNTAET for reconstruction and development programs in Timor-Leste (La’o Hamutuk 2000). In October 1999, the World Bank led a Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), partnering experts with East Timorese counterparts to assess the reconstruction needs in the immediate aftermath of the referendum (Cliffe 2003). The subsequent report (JAM 1999) was tabled at a donor’s conference in Tokyo on 17 December 1999 co-chaired by UNTAET’s SRSG Sergio de Mello and the World Bank’s Vice President Jean-Michel Severino. The Tokyo donor’s conference was deemed successful with a total of US$522.45 million pledged: US$148.98 million for humanitarian activities and US$373.47 million for civil administration, reconstruction and development (UN 2000a).

Importantly UNTAET was the first UN peacebuilding mission to include a Gender Affairs Unit, despite its establishment pre-dating the adoption of Resolution 1325. As UNTAET prepared Timor-Leste for independence, which occurred on 20 May 2002, the Gender Affairs Unit worked to ensure the inclusion of women in Timor-Leste’s reconstruction and development. At independence, the Gender Affairs Unit became the new East Timorese government’s women’s machinery: the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE). Following independence and the withdrawal of UNTAET, the UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET, 2002-2005) was established. The peacebuilding and state-building tasks of UNMISET were severely scaled back when compared to UNTAET, however a heavy military component remained which maintained control of the East Timorese police force until 2004. UNMISET was established as Timor-Leste gained its independence, and as such the mission was mandated to provide crucial support to the countries new governance structures along with playing a key policing role. UNMISET’s gender unit was also heavily scaled back to a single gender advisor, who worked with the newly created OPE. UNMISET remained in control of Timor-Leste’s policing functions until 2004 and was operational until 2005 when it was succeeded by the UN Office of Support in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), a small political mission designed to support capacity
building in state institutions and in the Timor-Leste National Police Force (PNLT). UNOTIL was established under the authority of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) rather than the DPKO which meant, officially, peacekeeping had ceased in the country and peacekeepers had departed.

UNOTIL represented what was supposed to be the draw-down of UN involvement in Timor-Leste. However, in 2006 a violent crisis broke out in response to political grievances within the national police force and between the police and the national military (UN Special Commission 2006). Both UNTAET and UNMISET are argued to have instituted weak security institutions in Timor-Leste for the sake of political expediency, thus making the 2006 crisis both foreseeable and a possible consequence of inadequate peacebuilding (Rees 20013; Lemay-Herbert 2009). The resulting instability, mostly centralised in the capital Dili, led to a renewed peacekeeping presence in Timor-Leste. In 2006 the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT, 2006-2012) was established which reclaimed control over the national police force and was essentially a ‘police mission’. UNMIT included a gender unit whose focus was consistent with the mandated priorities of the mission: capacity building in regards to gender within the government and ensuring a gender perspective and women’s representation was part of programs directed towards the reformation and rehabilitation of the PNLT. The predominant priority of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste remained a traditional security focus: ensuring the integrity of a state’s borders and monopolising the use of force in the states hands. While peacekeeping has evolved from traditional peacekeeping it is still very much imbued with a traditional, military understanding of security, and consequently peace.

**The chapters**

The early chapters of this thesis set up the theoretical and contextual frameworks needed to analyse the operation of the UN’s gender work in Timor-Leste. The following chapter, chapter two, provides a critical review of the relevant literature with particular focus on the development and adoption of a gender perspective in UN peace operations. The chapter examines critical perspectives of peacebuilding, especially feminist critical perspectives, which provide the theoretical framework for analysing how gender and gendered identities can be said to constitute peacebuilding practice. The chapter outlines the twin mandates of the UN’s Women, Peace and Security agenda – women’s empowerment and women’s protection – which become important organising frameworks for the thesis. The chapter examines the internal and external dimensions of the UN’s gender work in regards to these two mandates, meaning the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security framework is intended to improve the UN’s own record in regard to female representation in its ranks, as well as peace dividends for women.
in host countries. The chapter argues that despite increasing rhetoric on a gender perspective being fundamental to building peace, the institutional adaptation of this perspective remains limited, with ad hoc implementation of under-resourced policy and units. Consistent with the feminist international relations and security literature examined, the chapter establishes the ongoing need for both material and discursive change in how gender is conceptualised and practiced in UN peace operations (Shepherd 2011). In reviewing the literature the chapter further argues that critical perspectives on peacebuilding that do not consider gender as a unit of analysis provide only a partial understanding of post-conflict peacebuilding practice.

Chapter three focuses on East Timorese women in occupation, resistance and independence. This chapter establishes the context of women’s activism into which UN peacebuilding launched its gender work, as Timor-Leste is one of the earliest examples of the UN adopting its Women, Peace and Security agenda in a peacebuilding mission. The chapter details the roots of East Timorese women’s activism for their rights, which is inextricably linked to their fight for independence throughout the Indonesian occupation period. Post-occupation, this activism shifted to focus on the UN, the new government of the independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and the reconstruction occurring in the country. This chapter surveys the post-occupation landscape in which East Timorese women were advocating for their rights and in which UN peacebuilding was espousing norms of women’s rights to participation and security. The second half of the chapter therefore examines the process of getting ‘gender’ on the UN agenda in Timor-Leste, a process to which East Timorese activists were essential. In examining this process, the chapter analyses how the operation of UN peacebuilding – as centralised, top-heavy and imposing – also characterised interaction between the UN presence and women’s organisations. The arguments made here draw on the critical perspectives established in the preceding chapter. In essence, the relatively consistent UN presence had important implications for policy processes and outcomes of gender work in Timor-Leste.

Chapter four focuses on the empowerment mandate as part of the UN’s gender work in Timor-Leste and how women were to be empowered by UN peacebuilding. The chapter suggests narrow formulations of empowerment, which were further characterised by the centralised and bureaucratic nature of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. Essentially, women’s empowerment in peacebuilding has come to rest on measures of women’s formal equality, particularly representation in decision-making. In the case of Timor-Leste, the chapter argues that the benefits of the UN’s empowerment programs have not been distributed equally in Timor-Leste, and are delineated along existing class and spatial stratifications. The chapter therefore highlights the limited cohort who were beneficiaries of the UN’s empowerment work, and that these gains have not translated well into broader substantive gender equality. While there are
understandable limits to the potential of UN peace operations to institute substantive equality, as will be examined in subsequent chapters, the UN presence can actually shape and delimit what is meant by women’s empowerment and equality, which importantly impacts on women’s activism.

Following a similar framework for analysis, chapter five examines women’s protection in Timor-Leste and how women were protected by UN peacebuilding. The chapter details the mandate of women’s protection and why it has been increasingly central to the UN’s Women, Peace and Security resolutions. The chapter then goes on to examine how, in Timor-Leste, protection centred increasingly on domestic violence, particularly from 2006 and the establishment of UNMIT. This chapter draws on feminist scholarship that highlights the tension between traditional conceptions of militarised security and women’s collective security (Tickner 1995; Enloe 2000; Cockburn & Enloe 2012), ultimately arguing a continuum of militarised gender violence in Timor-Leste, which has been perpetuated by the presence of militarised peacebuilding missions. In this regard the chapter outlines the occurrence of peacekeeper perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse and examines the UN’s response to its occurrence. Thus the chapter also argues that a continuum of violence can be identified in Timor-Leste that is associated with militarism, and importantly that this continuum was in part perpetrated post-occupation by the presence of a large militarised peacekeeping mission. Even where sexual and gender based violence appeared on the UN agenda in order to improve women’s security, this did not adequately respond to cases of peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse nor overcome impunity for such crimes.

Following examination of women’s empowerment and women’s protection in Timor-Leste, chapter six more closely analyses the way that ‘gender’ is conceptualised within peacebuilding discourse and practice, drawing on the frameworks set out in the preceding chapters. While the preceding chapters examine limited notions of both women’s empowerment and women’s security in post-conflict reconstruction, they pay more attention to how the actual presence of UN peacebuilding can undermine both. Chapter six brings to the fore limitations in how gender is institutionally conceptualised, and what this means for how women in particular are viewed and incorporated into peacebuilding missions. The chapter argues that within the UN’s peacebuilding discourse there are evident conceptual limitations in the way that ‘gender’ is conceived of and in turn applied in policy. The bureaucratic rigidity outlined throughout the thesis is limited in its capacity to move beyond notions of gender that relate predominantly to women and are themselves based on dualistic gender conceptions. From a post-structural perspective, these conceptual limitations evidently result in a ‘gendering’ function (Shepherd 2010, 76; Harding 1986, 17-18), which posits particular gendered ideas about what certain
subjects can do or should do in post-conflict reconstruction based on constructed gender dualisms. Gender within UN peacebuilding is therefore shaped by normative gender conceptions as well as constituting what women “might be, do or want in the field of gender and security” (Shepherd 2011, 504). This argument draws on works on power and discourse, the mutually constitutive relationship between the two, and on post-structural perspectives that characterise peacebuilding not simply as gendered but as gendering – that is, peacebuilding is a site in which gendered identities are reproduced (Shepherd 2010, 76-79; Foucault 1970, 1972). Drawing on critical perspectives of peacebuilding, the chapter further suggests that this discourse is imbued with racial, as well as gendered, hierarchical presumptions.

Chapter seven focuses more closely on the role of women’s organisations in Timor-Leste, highlighting their agency and their actions as negotiators of gender and its meaning. In examining the work of national women’s organisations, the chapter details the resistance these organisations have faced in their work. National resistance to international gender norms has long been recognised in the literature, especially as ‘traditional culture’ (attached to the national realm) is often characterised as antithetical to the implementation of international modern gender norms (Merry 2003). Although East Timorese resistance to the gender components of peacebuilding have been evident, this chapter takes into consideration the presence of 13 years of highly centralised UN peace operations when trying to understand this resistance, suggesting that consideration of the UN presence in understanding resistance is essential. Drawing on post-colonial perspectives, the chapter examines whether resistance to gender work could be considered solely a function of patriarchal relations. The arguments presented here suggest that rather than a simplified position of international gender norms challenging inequitable domestic gender relations, the UN’s own shortcomings – as evidenced by the preceding chapters – in supporting transformative gender relations must also be taken into consideration.

In addition, chapter seven draws attention to East Timorese national women’s organisations and their work at the coalface between international gender norms and the domestic population. In its analysis of the work of women’s organisations, chapter seven critically reviews the role of civil society organisations in peacebuilding as national partners, examining hierarchical frameworks of power and knowledge in the ‘training’ of civil society partners (Zanotti 2006; Reeves 2012). Implied in the system of training and evaluation embodied within international peace operations is a hierarchical framework of knowledge. The knowledge of international actors is considered superior and objective and can thus be imparted into any given context. Yet the chapter also argues that women’s organisations in Timor-Leste negotiated around the concept of gender, thus demonstrating agency. Therefore, while conceptual and practical limitations of gender are important considerations, they do not suggest that East Timorese
women or women’s organisations were simply subject (or ‘subjects’) to policy implementation. Although women’s organisations were used as vehicles to implement gender policy, they were also consistently vocal about what they wanted from the UN presence.

While each chapter makes its own specific arguments in addressing a particular aspect of how the UN conceives of gender in its peacebuilding operations, and how the implementation of this works in practice, they are linked by common arguments. In Timor-Leste the international community provided a certain model of how to ‘do’ gender: gender working groups, gender focal points, focus groups, gendered assessments, analyses and workshops. To some degree this is reflected in the current systems established within East Timorese government. The modus operandi of UN peacebuilding – short-term, technical, bureaucratic and centralised – is not well suited to transforming complex, fluid gendered social relations that shape and are shaped by war and peace. Moreover, the UN’s gender perspective cannot be excised from the broader peacebuilding matrix. Simply adding women to existing (imperfect) structures does not sufficiently consider the gendered nature of peace, nor the intersections between gendered and other identities, and their relation to different axis of power (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, 5-7). What the additive approach further denotes is that the UN’s incorporation of a gender perspective into its peacebuilding practice is itself both gendered and gendering. Ultimately the thesis contributes to feminist critical perspectives on peacebuilding praxis, arguing that critical perspectives that do not take gender as a consideration to fully capture the social, political and economic landscape of post-conflict reconstruction. The theoretical and conceptual framework for the analyses provided in this thesis is drawn out in the following chapter, and critical perspectives on the nature of UN peacebuilding specifically in the case of Timor-Leste begin are examined in chapter three.
2: Critical and feminist perspectives on gender and peacebuilding

The last two and a half decades have seen the increasing use of humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping forces and peacebuilding operations by international actors intervening to cease conflict and ameliorate its consequences. The 1990s saw an increase in the number of UN mandated peacebuilding missions as well as a fundamental expansion in their methods of building peace (Kaldor 2007a, 2007b). The changing quantitative and qualitative characteristics of peacebuilding, including the addition of a ‘gender component’, have also given rise to increasing academic interest and debate, especially amongst international relations and security studies scholars. Feminist international relations and security studies scholars have exposed the gendered dimensions of violence, war, peace and peacebuilding (Cohn 1993; Enloe 1989, 2000, 2004a; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Pettman 1996; Tickner 1995, 2001; True 2012). In particular regard to peace operations, these authors highlight how peacebuilding processes and the way that national and international security are conceptualised both shape and are shaped by gendered identities.

This chapter critically reviews the relevant literature for the thesis, beginning with the nature of liberal peacebuilding and critical perspectives on UN peace operations. In order to conduct a gender analysis of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste it is essential to understand not just how peace operations have evolved, but also critical perspectives that highlight important themes, such as power and agency, in peacebuilding generally. Although critical perspectives have examined the conceptual and practical limitations in peacebuilding processes, and the position of peacebuilding in international relations, they have not exposed the gendered and gendering aspects of peacebuilding. For this reason the chapter then examines feminist perspectives on international relations and security, a rich body of literature that has laid the groundwork for gendered analyses of peace and peacebuilding, and which has detailed how war and peace are both gendered and gendering. Therefore, while critical perspectives on peacebuilding are important, they do not characterise gendered identities as fundamental to how peacebuilding frameworks are conceptualised and operated in host states. Critical perspectives that fail to take gender considerations into account are inadequate tools for understanding the full remit of UN peace operation policy, their outcomes, and the unintended consequences of a peacebuilding presence.

These theoretical concepts are drawn on throughout the thesis and are fundamental to understanding myriad permutations of how gender and gendered identities can be argued to inform peacebuilding practice. The theoretical frameworks established in this body of literature
provide the rationale for the conduct of this research project, which examines how the gender component of UN peacebuilding operated in the context of Timor-Leste. The chapter critiques the dominant paradigm of liberal peacebuilding and assesses the relative strength of critical perspectives on peacebuilding. Consistent with the theoretical framework established in this chapter, this thesis argues that in examining the gender component of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste the fundamental necessity of gender analysis in peacebuilding is reiterated. In turn, the thesis argues limitations in how gender is conceptualised and practiced in peace operations and what this means for women’s empowerment, women’s security, and women’s organising in post-conflict settings, further highlighting the centrality of gender norms to how peacebuilding operates.

**Development of peacebuilding in the UN system**

The practice of peacekeeping has not been static and has evolved markedly since the establishment of the UN. Traditional peacekeeping, which is most often associated with missions during the Cold War, was guided by the three basic principles of consent, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mission mandate. This model of traditional peacekeeping is described as the “conceptual point of departure for all other types of peace operations” (Bellamy & Williams 2010, 173). Traditional peacekeeping reflects a realist security framework, in which state sovereignty remains paramount regardless of domestic political structures. In a realist framework international intervention into domestic politics on humanitarian grounds is avoided due to the primacy given to state sovereignty (Chandler 2004). Until the 1990s however the UN’s capacity to undertake peacekeeping missions, even traditional, was severely limited. This is because the conduct of peacekeeping was characterised by the bipolarity of the Cold War, as the two superpowers, the US and USSR, projected their national interests abroad via the UN Security Council. Only a handful of peacekeeping missions were undertaken during the Cold War, which were much more limited in scope when compared to peace operations in the contemporary period, and mostly mandated to monitor ceasefires or peace processes (Bellamy & Williams 2010, 81-88). As political tensions abated in the late 1980s and early 1990s the Security Council was no longer deadlocked between two opposing states with vetoing power. This meant that more peacekeeping missions, justified on a broader range of reasons, were initiated and in turn peacekeeping began to evolve and develop as experience was gained in a number of different conflict and post-conflict states.

In 1992, then Secretary General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali released *An Agenda for Peace*, which established the fundamentals for peace support operations that could be undertaken by the UN, including peacemaking, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and preventative
diplomacy (Boutros-Ghali 1995). *An Agenda for Peace* was the “first systematic treatment of peacebuilding within the UN system” and reflected the development of peacekeeping that began to occur from the early 1990s (Sens 2004, 145). In particular Boutros-Ghali noted the complex dynamics of conflicts that could not be understood or ameliorated with a traditional peacekeeping approach of interposing oneself between two warring factions. Instead, security and insecurity were related to myriad factors that were both the causes and consequences of conflict. Boutros-Ghali (1995, 42), recognising nascent conceptions of human security, stated that insecurity came in many forms and was not limited to typical notions of military warfare. Rather, individual and collective security, and thus international security, can be undermined by factors such as ecological damage, the rise of nuclear weapons, disruptions to family and community life and the fact that “poverty, disease, famine, oppression and despair abound” (Boutros-Ghali 1995, 42). Traditional peacekeeping was not sufficient to neither combat such a wide range of security issues nor safeguard international security, and thus its expansion has seen it take on humanitarian programs and developing liberal state intuitions to help mitigate such issues wherever possible.

The end of the Cold War, the changing nature of contemporary conflicts (see Kaldor 2007a, 2007b) and the increasing salience of intervention on humanitarian grounds saw quantitative and qualitative change in peacekeeping operations, what Bellamy and Williams (2010, 93) describe as a “normative transformation” in UN peacekeeping. Mary Kaldor (2007a, 2007b) argues that the development of peacekeeping was occurring simultaneously with the erosion of the norm of non-intervention and the emergence of the notion of ‘human security.’ During the 1990s notable UN peacekeeping missions were established in Somalia (1992), Rwanda (1993) and Bosnia (1995), in which the UN was tasked with undertaking peacekeeping actions that combined both military and humanitarian components and aimed to consolidate sustainable peace rather than simply halt conflict.

By 1995, expanding peacekeeping visions were however tempered as the UN missions in Bosnia and Rwanda in particular were viewed as failures. As Mary Kaldor (2007a, 22) suggests, the “actual experience of intervention has been disappointing, and in some cases, shameful”, referring not just to the failure to halt conflict but also to the behaviour of peacekeepers while

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1 Human security, a concept which shifts the referent object of security from states to individuals, gained international attention when it was used in the 1994 UN Human Development Report (UNDP 1994). The report argued that for too long the concept of security had been defined by the potential for conflict between states and that this failed to capture most people’s security concerns (UNDP 1994). Human security combines – and has an affinity with – human rights and human development principles, and much has been written on the nexus between security and development (for example see Chandler 2007; Duffield 2001).
on mission (Razack 2004; Whitworth 2005). Such peacekeeping failures gave rise to an increasing humanitarian agenda in the UN’s peace and security work and the decreasing legitimacy of the primacy of state sovereignty. Both UN missions to Somalia (UNOSOM I and UNOSOM II) were marked by high levels of violence and large numbers of causalities, both of local populations and UN peacekeepers. In Bosnia, UNMIBH was heavily criticised for the infamous fall of the UN designated ‘safe area’ Srebrenica in July 1995 following increasing military attacks in the months prior (Human Rights Watch 1995). During the offensive that led to the fall, Dutch peacekeepers were taken hostage and UN observation posts and blockades overrun or abandoned; Bosnian Serb forces were able to pass through Srebrenica and onto Potocari, a town with a UN base where UN troops and Srebrenica civilians had begun to mass, without much resistance (Human Rights Watch 1995, 18-19). In the aftermath of Srebrenica’s fall, thousands of unarmed men and boys were executed and buried in mass graves “while the international community attempted to negotiate access to them” (UNGA 1999, 72).

The UN’s mission to Rwanda, UNAMIR, also failed to prevent genocide. UNAMIR was established in Rwanda in October 1993 and was mandated to monitor a cease-fire agreement and the security situation more generally (UNSC 1993). As the security and political situation deteriorated, UN headquarters repeatedly failed to respond to requests from UNAMIR command to be allowed to use force, and to act on intelligence regarding planned killings, the activities of militias and reported locations of arms caches. Cables from UNAMIR to UN headquarters detail the increasing violence against UNAMIR civilian personnel as well as against Rwandese “all belonging to one ethnic group” (UNSC 1999d). In a particularly disturbing case, thousands of refugees were massacred while sheltering in a camp under UN protection when UNAMIR troops withdrew without informing their Force Commander of the refugees’ presence (Wills 2009, 32-33).

Independent inquiries were established by the UN in 1999 to report on the actions taken in Rwanda and in the fall of Srebrenica. The independent report of the inquiry into Rwanda (UNSC 1999d, 3) found that:

The failure by the UN to prevent, and subsequently to stop, the genocide in Rwanda was a failure by the UN system as a whole. The fundamental failure was the lack of resources and political commitment devoted to developments in Rwanda…There was a persistent lack of political will by Member States to act, or to act with enough assertiveness.
The inquiries found serious shortcomings in the operation and implementation of these missions and exposed gaps between the rhetorical commitments of expanding peacekeeping functions and the conceptual and material resources made available to the missions in practice (Bellamy & Williams 2010, 93). These peacekeeping failures led to what Bellamy and Williams (2010, 93) have described as a period of “hesitant introspection” by the UN and the rising prominence of prioritising humanitarian agendas over state sovereignty.\(^2\) Noting the shortcomings of the first wave of peacekeeping post-Cold War, then Secretary General Kofi Annan released the report *We the Peoples* (Annan 2000) on the role of the UN in the twenty-first century and in preparation for the Millennium Summit. In supporting intervention in states on humanitarian grounds, Annan (2000, 48) argued:

> I accept that the principles of sovereignty and non-interference offer vital protection to small and weak states. But to the critics I would pose this question: if humanitarian intervention is indeed an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?

Annan further articulated the development of peacekeeping, away from the traditional approach, towards post-conflict peacebuilding. The objective of such was, in essence, “to assist the parties engaged in conflict to pursue their interests through political channels”, and thus the UN aimed to strengthen political institutions in collaboration with governments, NGOs and civil society groups (Annan 2000, 48). Essentially, peacekeeping has been evolving towards what is now termed post-conflict liberal peacebuilding, with attention given to re-building state institutions and the economy in the image of a liberal democracy, as well as ceasing violent conflict between warring armies.

At the Millennium Summit, Kofi Annan called for an expert panel – headed by former Algerian foreign minister Lakhdar Brahimi – to review UN peace operations, to assess institutional shortcomings, and to make recommendations for the future development of UN peace operations. In 2000, the *Report of the panel on United Nations peace operations* (hereafter the Brahimi Report) was released, highlighting endemic problems in peace operations and calling

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\(^2\) Such shortcomings did not go unnoticed in other locales. As Desmond Ball (2001, 58) explains, militias in Timor-Leste initially tried to dislodge InterFET via aggression and propaganda: “[The Indonesian armed forces] doubt InterFET’s staying power drawing analogies with Somalia [where the killing of UN peacekeepers prompted their withdrawal in 1993]”.


for significant institutional change (UN 2000b, viii). In the Brahimi Report, peacebuilding and peacekeeping are institutionally distinguished, although in practice they remain interwoven:

In such complex operations, peacekeepers work to maintain a secure local environment while peacebuilders work to make that environment self-sustaining. Only such an environment offers a ready exit to peacekeeping forces, making peacekeepers and peacebuilders inseparable partners (UN 2000b, viii-ix).

The Brahimi Report detailed that peacebuilding was multidimensional in nature and that “all peace operations should be given the capacity to make a demonstrable difference in the lives of the people in their mission area” (UN 2000b, 7). Thus, since 2000 the UN Security Council has endorsed a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where each are seen as complementary and aspects of both are required in order to halt conflict and sustain peace. This approach has been recently reiterated in the Security Council where a 2013 open debate on peacekeeping resulted in the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2086 (UN 2013). Security Council Resolution 2086 called for greater consistency and cooperation in missions with broad mandates including improving safety and security, assisting governments with disarmament policy and process, supporting institution building, humanitarian tasks, training or capacity building operationalised and which can better engage with national governments and stakeholders (UN 2013).

Thus the late twentieth and early twenty-first century period was one of intense institutional reflection into the nature of peacebuilding operations, their scope and capacity. Indeed inquiry into the nature of the UN’s peace operations is ongoing. On 31 October 2014, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement establishing the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to conduct a “comprehensive assessment of the state of United Nations peace operations today and the emerging needs of the future” (UN 2014). Headed by Timor-Leste’s Jose Ramos Horta, the panel includes the UN’s former Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in Timor-Leste Ameerah Haq (UNMIT) and former UNAMET head Ian Martin. The rationale behind the establishment of the panel was given as an acknowledgement that contemporary peace operations “are increasingly called on to confront politically complex and challenging conflicts, often in volatile security environments where [UN] operations are directly targeted” (UN 2014). Peace operations must continue to evolve “if they are to remain an indispensable and effective tool in promoting international peace and security” (UN 2014). The first review since the Brahimi Report, the panel will be the first to assess both peacekeeping
missions and special political missions, with the recommendations to be made available for consideration by the General Assembly for the general debate scheduled for September 2015 (UN 2014).  

In this thesis, peacebuilding is used to refer to the expanded approach to international peace and security which has developed since the 1990s, and includes military forces or peacekeepers. Indeed, the use of military forces and techniques remains fundamental to peacebuilding despite the incorporation of humanitarian ideals and institution building. Rather than peacekeeping and peacebuilding being synonymous, peacebuilding is used as an umbrella term. The use of the term peacebuilding reflects the broadening of peace operations which have come to encompass institutional, economic, political and military goals in order to mitigate to whatever extent possible the complex and multidimensional causes and consequences of conflict and insecurity. For example, in Timor-Leste each mission established post-referendum except UNOTIL has come under the remit of the DPKO, and are therefore strictly speaking ‘peacekeeping’ missions. However the mandates and tasks of each mission mean that the term peacebuilding better encapsulates their work on the ground. Despite the diversity of terminology used within and outside the UN, there are three key principles embodied within peacebuilding: firstly, is to halt conflict and discourage its recurrence; second is the rebuilding of the state’s institutional capacity and its legitimacy; and third is to build a sustainable peace, that is, to develop society’s capacity to manage conflict, as well as the state’s (Barnett et al. 2007, 49-50).

'Liberal' peacebuilding

Liberal ideologies are fundamental to contemporary approaches to peacebuilding and it is for this reason that contemporary peacebuilding is referred to in the literature as ‘liberal peacebuilding’. Liberal peacebuilding has emerged through a “complex evolution within a very specific political, economic, social, conceptual and methodological environment which has universal ambitions” (Richmond & Franks 2009, 3-4). Liberal peacebuilding, broadly speaking, incorporates the cornerstones of liberalism and a modern liberal democratic state; that is, democratisation, rule of law, human rights and a free and globalised market (Newman, Paris & Richmond 2009; Richmond & Franks 2009; Heathershaw 2008a). What is referred to in academic literature as liberal peacebuilding is institutionally referred to as ‘multidimensional

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3 The development of peacebuilding within the UN system has also included the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2006, as an outcome of the 2005 World Summit (UNGA 2005). The rationale for the PBC’s establishment was to more adequately respond to the UN’s expanding peacebuilding role and, according to the International Peace Institute (IPI 2008), ameliorate some of the problems arising within the UN, including: “inadequate coordination among UN agencies and departments…lack of timely and adequate financing for the…start-up of restoration of government institutions in post-conflict contexts…[and a] lack of medium-term political attention to countries emerging from conflict.” Missions that come under the PBC’s remit are outside the remit of this thesis.
peacekeeping’, and indeed Timor-Leste is considered an example of successful modern multidimensional approaches to peacekeeping (see UN 2013).

The ideological underpinning of liberal peacebuilding is that of the democratic peace theory: liberal democratic states are seen as less likely or unlikely to go to war with each other (Doyle 1983). One of the earlier proponents of liberal peace theory, Michael Doyle (1983, 213), claims that “even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with non-liberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another.” Although the arguments are often opaque, there are two elements to liberal peace’s causal theory: firstly, that institutional restraints prevent war between democracies, either through public opinion or checks and balances in domestic political institutions; and secondly that democratic “norms and culture”, such as a shared commitment to peace, account for the absence of war between democratic states (Layne 1994, 6). The foundation of democratic peace theory is generally attributed to Immanuel Kant, the eighteenth century German philosopher, and his 1795 thesis The perpetual peace (see Doyle 1983; Layne 1994; Owen 1994).

In defence of liberal peace, Owen (1994) argues that liberal ideas “cause liberal democracies to tend away from war with one another, and that the same ideas prod these states into war with illiberal states.” Therefore a causal relationship is drawn between liberal democratic states, liberal democratic institutions and a reduced likelihood of warfare between states with similar institutions, and ultimately to international peace and security. Democratic peace theory is thus the conceptual foundation for liberal peacebuilding, the aim of which is the “transformation of societies into as near a reflection of liberal democracy as can be achieved institutionally in historically and culturally different societies” (Jabri 2013, 8). This agenda has extended to development organisations and UN agencies, like the UNDP, meaning democracy promotion on the part of the UN is not simply within the remit of the Security Council (Santiso 2002). Liberal institution building in conflict prone (illiberal) states becomes a rational exercise in perpetuating sustainable peace and is geared towards transforming the state itself (Jabri 2013, 8).

Promoting democratic institutions as part of peacebuilding conceptualises a ‘peace-as-governance’ framework in that international security becomes contingent on the mode of governance within states: “the liberal state provides the framework for the creation of peace at local state and international levels” (Richmond & Franks 2009, 6). The centrality of democratic governance to peace and security has also been expounded by state actors. For example, in 1994, then US President Bill Clinton stated in his State of the Union address that “ultimately the best strategy to insure [sic] our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of
democracy elsewhere” (cited in Owen 1994, 87). The promotion of liberalism and democracy was repeated by George W. Bush during his Presidency, stating “…the United States will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world” (cited in Monten 2005, 112). Promoting democracy has therefore become an internationally accepted means of international intervention for humanitarian and security reasons, and fundamental to the notion of liberal peacebuilding.

Critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding

The aim of liberal peacebuilding is to transform conflict and post-conflict societies into well-functioning internationally legitimate states. What distinguishes liberal peacebuilding from the UN’s traditional approach to peacekeeping is that it combines both military and civilian components with the aim to transform conflict societies into liberal democratic states (Bellamy & Williams 2010, 279). This transformative aspect is important and differs from traditional peacekeeping’s remit of neutral interlocutors who may prevent conflict but ultimately do not aim to shape the post-conflict political, economic and social landscape. The transformational ambitions highlight more than just the evolution of peacebuilding but also its expansion, as the security aspirations of the UN and its member states increasingly capture various yet interrelated aspects of a state’s functions. Examining the quality of peacebuilding, its historical basis, its assumptions and praxis underlie critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding. As Oliver Richmond and Roger MacGinty (2014, 12) state:

Perhaps the most important contribution made by the critique of the liberal peace has been the challenge to the naturalised power lying in the state-system and its historical formation. This has involved challenging its claim to make peace, develop and save the other, in the face of its own failings and its denial of others’ rights.

In essence, liberal peacebuilding “posits a very specific vision of how a free society should be constructed and how its component parts should interrelate” (Hughes 2009a, 218). Reflecting a growing consensus that conflict is best approached by what Duffield (2001, 11) describes as a “number of connected, ameliorative, harmonising and, especially, transformational measures”, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has claimed that “no other international tool was as effective [as multidimensional peacekeeping] in combining political, security, rule of law and human rights efforts” (UN 2013). Yet as Vivienne Jabri (2013) notes, the institutional shift from traditional peacekeeping to complex peacebuilding does not represent a transformation of the international political economy nor its outcomes for post-colonial, poor and weak states.
Peacebuilding embodies a transformative principle that seeks to transform the “dysfunctional and war-affected societies that it encounters on its borders into cooperative, representative and, especially, stable entities” (Duffield 2001, 11). The shift from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is, Jabri (2013, 10) claims, a shift in the UN’s remit towards the re-shaping and transformation of societies, one that would ‘correct’ the ‘failure’ of states, reforming them so they can govern internally as well as participate in the global political economy.

Despite apparent shortcomings in previous experiences of peacekeeping, such as the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda discussed previously, developments in peacebuilding remain consistent with western-style liberal democratic market values and represent the “globalisation of a particular model of domestic governance” (Paris 2000, 2002). Indeed it is these earlier failures that led to the expansion of peacebuilding, rather than peacebuilding aspirations being pared back. The aim, of course, is to consolidate peace so that it may endure following the end of a peacebuilding mission’s mandate; however this is not always the case. As Charles Call (2008a, 1) suggests, failed peacebuilding “represents one of the worst risk factors for new wars.” Yet the field of literature most relevant for this thesis are those critical perspectives that focus on the type of ‘peace’ that is being instituted, questioning the legitimacy of outside actors in building state institutions, often pointing to the partial or limited democratic institutions they instate (Chopra 2000, 2002; MacGinty 2008). Some have argued that what does remain consistent throughout a number of liberal peacebuilding projects is that the way in which liberal peace is promoted, the degree to which it is enforced and the quality of the peace it ensures has almost always been unsatisfactory (MacGinty & Richmond 2007, 491). For example, democratic elections have not proved self-perpetuating, a liberalised economy has not been to the benefit of all equally, and the institutions and politics enforced as part of peacebuilding often fail to resolve tensions between different social groups, ameliorate inequality between social groups, or prevent relapses into violent conflict (Chopra 2000, 2002; Pugh 2009; MacGinty 2010).

In liberal peacebuilding, the type of peace being pursued is often viewed as limited in that it more readily reflects what Johan Galtung (1969) termed “negative peace”, meaning simply the absence of physical violence. Such a conception of peace is opposed to a more substantive peace in which both physical and structural violence are diminished, or “positive peace” (Galtung 1969). The concept of positive peace bears similarities with the concept of human security, proponents of which argue for a broader definition of security to include concerns such as poverty, hunger, health and environmental issues. UN peacebuilding interventions end though based on institutional definitions of (negative) ‘peace’, rather than based on these broader conceptualisations of security. The withdrawal of international resources is determined
by powerful states, rather than the local population (Call 2008a, 6). For example, Jarat Chopra (2000, 31) provides the following critique of the transitional administration (UNTAET) in Timor-Leste:

...widespread unemployment, intermittent food distribution and the absence of reconstruction also indicated that the UN had no operational plan; there were no timetables or milestones of achievement that might have driven a transfer of power. UNTAET’s implicit agenda bore the ominous hallmarks of a typical UN ‘exit strategy’ by avoiding committed engagement in problem-solving; holding a face-saving election after a reasonable period; and withdrawing without having built adequate local capacity.

The relationship between international interveners and local populations is also a source of concern, especially the inherent power imbalances and the coercive nature of peacebuilding. At the core of these discussions is whether peacebuilding is seen as ‘top-heavy’ or centralised and the location of agency in peacebuilding (Jabri 2013). The notion that peacebuilding is centralised and internationally driven is an important critical perspective, but also has implications for the approach to gender issues and for women’s organising, as will be discussed in the following chapter in the case of Timor-Leste. Some critical perspectives suggest that liberal peacebuilding projects are essentially self-interested democratisation projects on behalf of Security Council members through which substantive peace is impossible to achieve (Pugh 2004; see also MacGinty 2010). Exporting certain values loosely inscribed within unstable institutional structures, and the utilisation of narrow indicators to judge success, are argued to be counterproductive to building substantive peace.

From these critical perspectives liberal peacebuilding represents a western imperialist project, embodying acute similarities with historical colonisation projects, which operate under a thinly veiled guise of humanitarianism (Pugh 2004). This perspective has emerged more strongly in the post-9/11 period and the focus on ‘democracy promotion’ that became part of US foreign policy as a result (Carothers 2006). Subsequent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq under a humanitarian and democracy promotion rubric, although not UN mandated peacebuilding missions, crystallised for many the idea that unjust wars were being fought in the name of liberalism and democracy (Carothers 2006). Pugh (2004) argues that modern versions of peacekeeping represent a form of “riot control” which reinforce the status quo of the current world order and that conflicts can be viewed as a manifestation of this hierarchical, inherently unequal world order; that is “riot control” that is required because the current world system...
provokes instability and inequity to begin with. Paris (2010, 338) disagrees with this hyper-critical stance arguing against the “careless conflation of multilateral peace operations with the US-led war on terror” and further argues that to abandon peacekeeping would be to abandon tens of millions to the horrors of disease and lawlessness. Nonetheless, the hegemonic, top-down nature of peacebuilding is problematic and deservedly challenged in critical perspectives (MacGinty 2010). Despite the humanitarian rhetoric, it remains that it is militarised responses that are justified as the most legitimate, if not only, response, which has negative implications for security of those in the states that are subject to such interventions (Orford 2003, 11-12).

The pre-existing framework of liberal peacebuilding assumes adherence and conformity and is not easily manipulated for myriad local complexities and contexts. These critical theories are in essence criticising what is seen as a hegemonic peace and security culture – one that is reflected in the hegemon in the UN Security Council – which aims to define peace and security in a way that is beneficial to those who designed it and extend their own national self-interests. Roland Paris (2003) argues that peacekeeping is constrained by a “global culture” which delineates normative approaches to peacekeeping and that institutions such as the UN are disinclined to pursue strategies that deviate from these norms. Fundamentally then the practice of peacebuilding and peacekeeping are cultural representations as well, which means they should be examined closely for the kinds of societies they seek to create and, importantly, who benefits. Analysing the gender component of peacebuilding exposes the subjective biases within peacebuilding practice and the internal domestic order it seeks to impose.

Hegemonic peacebuilding approaches reflects a notion that international peacebuilding is objective and methodical, a process that can ameliorate the complex, subjective, ‘cultural’ nature of domestic conflict-prone states. Peacebuilding programs tend to be bureaucratic and rigid, externally and donor driven with little local engagement “other than as a ‘target’ population of victims” (Bush & Duggan 2014, 3010; see also Hughes 2009a, 2009b; Chopra 2002; Orford 2003). Peacebuilding rests to some extent on the infantilisation of its recipient as a professionalised elite largely controls peacebuilding missions and missions are template driven rather than domestically defined (Richmond 2009a, 152-53). Vivienne Jabri (2013, 9) notes that ‘the local’ is not the driver behind multidimensional peacebuilding practices, “even though the ‘local’ may, at some point, come on board…as indeed it has to, simply to render operations on the ground workable”; here Jabri (2013) notes the use of translators and local professionals. Lakhdar Brahimi, author of the Brahimi Report (UN 2000b), reflected on this position of greater allowance for local peacebuilding initiatives, stating:
It should be obvious to all concerned – but alas, it is not – that the sole agenda around which everyone should unite in a post-conflict situation can only be one that serves the interests of the people we pretend to be there to help and them alone. The reality, however, is that there invariably is a plurality of different agendas and if the national interest of the local population is not totally ignored, it is rarely given the priority it deserves (Brahimi 2007, 3).

More recently literature has emerged in which domestic actors and local context have been brought to the fore to combat the perceived hegemonic nature of peacebuilding theory and practice (Chopra 2002; Futamura & Notaras 2011; Kappler & Richmond 2011; Tomforde 2010; UN General Assembly 2009). Local ownership, or ‘peacebuilding from below’, refers to the extent to which domestic actors have control over both the design and implementation of political processes during peacebuilding: “in post-conflict contexts, the term conveys the common sense wisdom that any peace process not embraced by those who have to live with it is likely to fail” (Donais 2009, 3). In essence this body of literature exposes that there is not a singular universally applicable approach to peace and security that can function equally well in diverse contexts, an assumption that is implied in template driven, centralised liberal peacebuilding missions. Therefore, scholars in this field attempt to shift the paradigm from ‘top-down’ to ‘bottom-up’, argued as a necessary shift to ensure the sustainability of peace once an international presence has departed (Duffey 2000). The disempowering nature of top-down peace operations is positioned as antithetical to building a sustainable and meaningful peace. As Nathan Funk (2012, 395) argues:

The introduction of a large foreign presence to a conflict zone tends to engender a number of conditions that are not necessarily conducive to long-term peace: failure to tap or cultivate local talent, the development of an economy that caters to the needs of foreign specialists, friction between internationals and locals, popular ambivalence about the trajectory of political change, and a debilitating sense of dependence on powerful outsiders.

Complex and multidimensional peacebuilding has therefore been criticised for its broadening into non-traditional areas and for consequently taking these roles away from domestic actors. In addition, complex and multidimensional peacebuilding missions often sit at the level of institutions, meaning they can be abstracted from people’s day-to-day lives (Whitworth 2004, 73). Emerging theories about shifting peacebuilding to a less institutionalised more empowering project are warranted and certainly top heavy missions are problematic for a number of reasons,
not least because they often disenfranchise the populations they set out to save (Richmond 2006). In Timor-Leste the local population was vociferous in its criticism of what was seen as a peacebuilding mission that lacked inclusiveness, demonstrated by the demand for a ‘Timorisation’ process during UNTAET.

There is however good reason to be cautious of ‘from below’ approaches to peacebuilding. For example, Donais and Knorr (2013, 4-6) suggest that bottom-up theories conceptualise post-conflict sites as a “flat landscape”, which leaves conflict generating systems of power unchallenged. Timothy Donais (2009) argues for a more nuanced understanding rather than a “full swing of the pendulum” towards peacebuilding from below. In most post-conflict societies there is usually a multitude of actors and potential ‘local owners’, and thus assuming one single coherent set of owners denies recognition of diversity, disunity and a hierarchical potentially unequal socio-political model.

This was demonstrated in Timor-Leste where there was an evident tension between what was conceived of as a ‘national’ space as opposed to a ‘local’ space. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, however here it is important to note that the two were conceived of as different spaces, denoting heterogeneity and hierarchy within the domestic arena; whereas in international peace rhetoric ‘local’ is often used in reference to a homogenised ‘national’ or domestic arena. From a gender perspective we need to remain wary of projects that seek to privilege domestic process simply because they are local, without also analysing who benefits from such processes. ‘From below’, local, indigenous or culturally sensitive approaches are just as likely to capture existing hierarchies and inequalities based on class, sex and sexuality, ethnicity, religion and inequality in urban-rural populations. The politicisation of both gender and culture in post-occupation Timor-Leste from both domestic and international actors demonstrates a need for inclusive, contextually relevant gender understandings of any given post-conflict situation and the need for this to inform the approach of institutional peacebuilding.

**Gender, women, war and peace**

It is now well established by feminist security studies and international relations scholars that gendered identities both shape and are shaped by war and conflict (Tickner 1995; Enloe 1989; Pettman 1996; Stiehm 1982, 1997; Pankhurst 2008a; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Shepherd 2010; Sjoberg 2009). These scholars have established a field of literature that in essence re-visions security and peace from a feminist perspective. Feminist international relations and critical security scholars have examined post-conflict peacebuilding processes in
relation to how conflict, war and peace constitute and are constituted by gendered identities and relations. Feminist security studies is an established field in its own right, one that has challenged women’s absence from international security politics, exposing gendered power in international relations (Enloe 1989; Blanchard 2003). Importantly, feminist security studies as a field has also challenged the assumption that women can be inherently and unreflectively connected to peace (Blanchard 2003). I would further suggest that feminist security studies and international relations scholars have highlighted the multiple axes of power that operate in war, conflict and peacebuilding, both national and international. Although critical security studies, discussed in the previous section, deepens its level of analysis to the individual, it does not base its research on women’s experiences, “nor do they interrogate gender as part of a matrix of power where it intersects with other markers such as class, race, nation, religion, sexuality, and more” (Wibben 2011, 592). Such axes of power are produced by and productive of war and peace (Shepherd 2008, 1).

During conflict, gender identities remain as powerful organising frameworks. Much empirical data now details the different and gendered experiences of men and women during conflict. Scholars such as Susan Brownmiller (1975) and Judith Hicks Stiehm (1982) have exposed the consequences of war and conflict on women’s security. Rather than being protected by war, which Stiehm (1982) argues is implied in traditional war narratives, women and men are threatened by war in complex and intertwining ways (see also Sjoberg & Peet 2011). Insecurity during war can be due to economic insecurity, increased violence in the community, lack of access to justice and diminished access to resources such as education, health-care, and food. Sexual violence, particularly against women and girls, during conflict and into post-conflict times is increasingly well documented (see Brownmiller 1975; Rehn & Sirleaf 2002; Skjelsbak 2011). The insights that have exposes gendered violence in war are important for examining ‘gender’ in post-conflict peacebuilding, as gendered violence precipitates into post-conflict times.

In 2002, Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf produced a report that assessed the impact of armed conflict on women. The report details the continuum of violence faced by women during conflict and into supposedly post-conflict times. Under-reporting is pervasive, reflecting gendered ideals that see shame and stigma directed towards victims who do come forward and

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4 Another important insight, though not dealt with explicitly in this thesis, is that gender inequality, and more specifically the inequality of women to men, affects state security and consequently international security (Hudson et al. 2012). As Hudson et al. (2012) argue gender inequality, in all its manifestations, is a form of violence. This claim resonates with Johan Galtung’s (1969) conceptualisation of ‘structural violence’ as “the cause of difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.”

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their subsequent marginalisation (Handrahan 2004). The report captures the extent of violence against women and its correlation with militarism and armed conflict, its occurrence within and outside the household, and its prevalence in displaced populations and refugee camps:

Violence against women is one of history’s great silences. We were completely unprepared for the searing magnitude of what we saw and heard in the conflict and post-conflict areas we visited. We knew the data. We knew that 94 per cent of displaced households surveyed in Sierra Leone had experienced sexual assaults…That at least 250,000 – perhaps as many as 500,000 – women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. We read reports of sexual violence in the ongoing hostilities in Algeria, Myanmar, Southern Sudan and Uganda. We learned of the dramatic increase in domestic violence in war zones, and of the growing numbers of women trafficked out of war zones to become forced labourers and forced sex workers…women, much more than men, suffer gender-based violence (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 9-10).

Globally, women experience many forms of violence and its occurrence in conflict has been suggested as part of a continuum of violence, rather than a separate or war-bound act that ceases when conflict ceases (Ni Aoláin, Haynes & Cahn 2011, 45-46; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Pankhurst 2003, 2008a). Women’s security is undermined by violence outside of war, and indeed Lori Handrahan (2004, 430) has asked that if such levels of violence against women are tolerated in non-conflict periods, then what happens to women’s security during war? During war, women continue to experience violence but are also victims of generalised violence as a method of war (Ni Aoláin, Haynes & Cahn 2011, 45; Handrahan 2004).

A transition from ‘conflict’ into ‘post-conflict’ is generally characterised by the formal cessation of violence between armed combatants, ideally transitioning to a situation where the state has a monopoly on the use of force (Harris-Rimmer 2012). Yet violence continues into supposedly post-conflict moments, although the perpetrators and context of that violence have shifted. Domestic and sexual violence predominantly committed against women continues post-conflict, leading Susan Harris-Rimmer (2012) to ask, can conflict be said to have ceased if violence against a portion of the population has simply shifted from the public arena to the private sphere? In Timor-Leste for example, Henri Myrttinen (2005) has suggested that the end of the occupation period has not led to an end of violence but rather the “domestication” of violence, indicated by high rates of domestic, sexual and gender based violence.
Peacekeeping too has contributed to the continuation of militarism and violence post-conflict and the continuing insecurity of women post-conflict. From the 1990s there have been a number of reports of peacekeepers, and others attached to peacebuilding endeavours, perpetrating sexual violence against women and children while on mission, and which remains an ongoing issue for UN peace operations (BBC 2005a; UN News Centre 2005; Csáky 2008; Martin 2005; Mendelson 2005; Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013; Laville 2015). As these reports emerged, monitors within peacekeeping missions problematised “institutional violence” at peacekeeping sites, such as brothels, prostitution and sexual interactions between peacekeepers and local women (Harrington 2010, 145). Others have challenged the overt militarism of peacekeeping, arguing it undermines the security of many people, women and men (Whitworth 2004).

Unsurprisingly, feminist security studies scholars have widely critiqued traditional security discourse, which has perpetuated an historical blindness to the diversity of women’s experiences in war, including women’s experiences of violence and insecurity. These critiques have exposed that women are admitted into traditional war narratives in only essentialist gendered ways that serve the continuance of war and violence; that is, wars are fought to protect vulnerable citizens, namely women and children (Stiehm 1982; Sjøberg & Gentry 2007). As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, 4) argue “states perpetuate a gendered ‘protection racket’ which marginalizes women while appearing to foreground their interests.” What is also lost in these narratives is that men are frequently victims of war, conflict and genocide, a vulnerability that is also perpetuated by the protector myth and militarism. Adam Jones (2000) has argued that non-combatant young men are the most frequently targeted for mass killing during conflict. Others have suggested that men’s victimisation is ignored in gendered war narratives because the power of men as protector of women and children will be tarnished if we consider that they too are victims of war (Haeri & Puechguirbal 2010, 107).

Beyond the multitude forms of direct and indirect violence that populations in conflict zones find permeating their day-to-day lives, gendered identities are utilised and shifted during the conduct of war (Enloe 1989; Handrahan 2004; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001). Constructed ideals of both masculinity and femininity are utilised in war and are mutually reinforcing (Enloe 2004a, 107). Where previously women’s experiences in war were sidelined, some feminist scholars have brought these experiences to the fore, thus illuminating the construction of masculinity and femininity simultaneously; removing an ‘ungendered’ view of men and their actions (Enloe 1989, 2004a). What is strongly reiterated is that women’s experiences of conflict and post-conflict are multiple and varied, and will be shaped by gendered identities as well as by other intersecting identities such as race, religion or ethnicity. For example, Lori Handrahan
(2004) highlights the intersection between both ethnic identity and gender identity in analysing the occurrence of war time rape. Ethnic and gender identity construct the enemy’s women as 'other', and violence against them can represent the “expansion of ethnic territory by the male conqueror” (Handrahan 2004, 437). Understanding gendered, and other, identities as fundamental to violence and war recognises that while those who perpetrate violence or are victims of violence may be male or female, gender is central to how and why violence is used against individuals and communities (Shepherd 2010, 75; Davies & True 2014).

In war, gendered roles often appear to be broken down as women are called on to undertake roles that were previously closed to them, such as taking up arms, and taking on jobs in previously male dominated areas. In addition, the liberation of women and improved equality is frequently connected to nationalist claims for the liberation of a country from war (Bop 2001; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, 7-8). In Timor-Leste for example, women’s emancipation was ideologically linked to the independence struggle and the emancipation of Timor-Leste. For this reason there are potential gains for women in war, which in turn has implications for potential post-conflict transformation (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, 7). Rita Manchanda (2001, 99) claims that a discourse of women’s “ambivalent” gains in war should be integrated into a predominant narrative of women’s victimisation and loss as a result of conflict: “conflict opens up intended and unintended spaces for empowering women, effecting structural social transformations and producing new social, economic and political realities that redefine gender.” Yet post-conflict is a time that often sees fundamentally inequitable gender relations strengthened, rather than challenged (Pankhurst 2008a, 2008c). For this reason, Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen (2001) suggest that it is during war, rather than in its aftermath, that the consolidation of women’s gains should be sought and the foundations laid for the transformation of patriarchal relations. Nonetheless, the predominant framework of international interventions, and much theory, is one in which the post-conflict moment is conceived of as an opportune time to institute gender equality via international gender norms (True 2013), and it is this process that is analysed in this thesis.

Post-conflict moments are an important time to cement equitable participation of men and women in newly forming political frameworks, especially as periods of post-conflict reconstruction are frequently characterised by continuing insecurities and inequalities for both women and men. These insecurities can be economic, political, environmental, and the continuing experience of violence or aggression. Donna Pankhurst suggests that a common occurrence during reconstruction is a “post-conflict backlash against women” (Pankhurst 2003, 2008a), and this has been the case in Timor-Leste, where post-occupation gender relations
continue to be negotiated, often to the detriment of the expansion of women’s roles and equality (Niner 2011a).

Using a gender lens to analyse post-conflict situations therefore suggests that the way in which ‘conflict’ and ‘post-conflict’ are predominantly conceived of are not as clearly distinct as would seem. Moreover, the post-conflict period can be marred by militarised gender identities, legacies of violence and continuing impunity for violent crimes, meaning getting issues such as these onto peace tables has been challenging. Violence remains a prominent feature of the post-conflict landscape. Coupling women’s ongoing experiences of violence along with their political, economic and social marginalisation in post-conflict times fundamentally underpinned the movement to get the Security Council – the primary UN decision maker regarding international peace and security (Cohn 2008, 186) – to take seriously women’s knowledge, experience and contributions to war, peace, and post-conflict reconstruction.

As women’s actual experiences of war have historically been disregarded, so too have their existing contributions to post-conflict reconstruction been ignored, and their access to formal peace processes limited. In post-conflict moments, there is frequently a dominant rhetoric of ‘returning’ or ‘restoring’ to an idealised pre-conflict past (Pankhurst 2008a, 2008b). Yet as feminist security studies scholars have highlighted, for women this can mean the re-institutionalisation of gender norms that have subordinated them to patriarchal power:

It is rarely considered that encouraging a return to what is considered ‘normal’ after a conflict may reflect the patriarchal order before the conflict, where women’s rights might have been routinely violated. Or that the international community’s definition of ‘normal’ tolerates high levels of violence against women in their own societies (Handrahan 2004, 440).

This is not to say that women have not contributed to the re-building of societies. Rather, their collective work and activism has been ignored or considered peripheral to the ‘real’ security matters of disarming combatants and building liberal political, economic and justice institutions. This has occurred at both national and international levels. It is this historical discounting of women’s experiences and contributions, the previous lack of commitment to consider women an important resource in rebuilding post-conflict societies in a way that responds to their rights, needs and interests, and the ongoing insecurity of marginalised men and women in post-conflict times that international action on Women, Peace and Security has sought to overcome.
'International gender norms'

As peacekeeping has evolved, so too have international norms relating to women’s rights, women’s equality and gender equality and these have been incorporated into peacebuilding practice. The way in which a gender perspective has been incorporated into UN peacebuilding practices is largely borne from transnational women’s activism that has highlighted the subordination and marginalisation of women in national and international contexts; this in turn has been adapted specifically to overcome gender bias in international peace and security operations and within the UN. Prior to the adoption and dissemination of various platforms, conventions and resolutions, the UN had been accused of perpetuating male-centred peace and security regimes that ignored women’s individual and collective security. As Cynthia Enloe (1989, 121) has noted, “for an organization intended to change the world, the United Nations looked remarkably like the patriarchal status quo.”

As an institution the UN has been central to the development of international norms on gender equality (Keck & Sikkink 1998; Krook & True 2012). From 1975, a series of world conferences on women were organised by the Commission on the Status of Women, a UN body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and promote women’s rights, and which is part of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). During the UN Decade for Women three global conferences were held in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). The intertwining themes of the Decade for Women were equality, development and peace. The Nairobi Conference saw nearly 14,000 women from around the globe come together, a majority of who were from the developing world (Çağatay, Grown & Santiago 1986, 402). East Timorese women were also present at both the Nairobi NGO Forum held prior to the official UN conference and the UN’s Fourth World Conference in Beijing 1995 (Hill 2012, 218).

It was during the decade for women that the Convention on the Elimination on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly, an international bill on women’s rights (UNGA 1979). CEDAW highlights a number of areas in which women are denied equality with men and covers extensively women’s legal, political, economic, social, reproductive and cultural rights. In 1993 the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW). DEVAW (UNGA 1993) framed violence against women as an obstacle to equality, development and peace – the three themes of the UN’s Decade for Women – and recognised violence against women as both a manifestation of and tool in women’s ongoing subjugation. In 1995, from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing came the Beijing Platform for Action (UN 1995), the objective of which was the “full empowerment of women.” The Beijing Platform for Action,
consistent with the founding UN Charter, argued that it was the duty of states to ensure that women were able to enjoy fully their human rights. The *Beijing Platform for Action* also acknowledged the intersectionality of women’s lives and lived experiences, noting that women’s enjoyment of their human rights must be ensured regardless of a state’s political, economic and cultural system. It further noted the global political and security climate of the time and women’s place in it. It stated that armed conflict, foreign occupations, civil wars, terrorism and extremist violence continued to undermine women’s security and violate women’s human rights through acts such as murder, torture, systematic rape, forced pregnancy and forced abortion (UN 1995).

The culmination of these movements is about recognising women’s unequal share of decision making power and simultaneously rectifying the historical silence in the international realm on both this exclusion, the subordination of women it perpetuates, and the differential experiences of women during times of conflict. Importantly they also provide the basis for the incorporation of a ‘gender perspective’ into UN peacebuilding. Taken together the conventions discussed above and the Women, Peace and Security resolutions discussed below represent what is colloquially termed international gender norms on women’s rights and gender equality more broadly. Notably the movements were driven by diverse groups of women from around the globe that represented various intersections of race, class, ethnicity and sexuality.

The watershed moment for the adoption of a Women, Peace and Security agenda within the Security Council, and thus within UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding, was the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSC 2000a). The adoption of Resolution 1325 was the first time that the Security Council had devoted an entire session to debating women’s experiences in conflict and post-conflict zones (Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings 2004, 10). The conceptual basis of Resolution 1325 lies in the article of the *Beijing Platform for Action* that is devoted to women and armed conflict (Cohn 2008, 187). Resolution 1325 calls for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed throughout peace support operations and the resolution is explicit about what that should entail. Resolution 1325 – along with subsequent Women, Peace and Security resolutions – have been summarised as encapsulating “three P’s” in regards to Women, Peace and Security: prevention of conflict, protection of women and girls during conflict and the participation of women and girls in peacekeeping and peacebuilding; with an additional fourth ‘P’, the prosecution of gender based violence in war, appearing in later resolutions (Porter & Anuradha 2012, 35). Resolution 1325 urges both the UN and member

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5 For an overview of the genesis and eventual adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 see Carol Cohn (2008, 187-91).
states to increase the number of women in decision-making roles, as Special Representatives to the Secretary General (SRSG’s) in missions, in all capacities of peacebuilding missions and for missions to, where appropriate, incorporate a gender component.

In post-conflict zones, Resolution 1325 calls on all actors to recognise the special needs of women and girls, to support local women’s peace initiatives and protection of women’s human rights in electoral, judiciary and police systems. Therefore, Resolution 1325 addresses women’s inequality at a number of levels, both within and outside the institutional structures of the UN and its peace operations. Resolution 1325 formally links the promotion of women’s rights with international peace and security and has become part of the UN’s formal discourse on peace and security (Tryggestad 2009). Also adopted in 2000, the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations promoted the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, or ‘gender mainstreaming’ (UNSC 2000b). A commonly agreed upon institutional definition of gender mainstreaming can be found in the ECOSOC ‘Agreed Conclusions’ which states gender mainstreaming is a:

...process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women 2002, v).

Adopted just prior to Resolution 1325, the opening declaration of the Namibia Plan of Action noted that despite the evolution of peacekeeping to “multidimensional peace support operations” women had been denied their full role in peace process and the gender dimensions of peacebuilding remained inadequately addressed (UNSC 2000b, 2). The Namibia Plan of Action detailed key areas in which gender should be mainstreamed in peace operations, including from the outset of peace negotiations, in mission mandates, within leadership roles in peace operations, in resourcing missions, and in training modules.

In 2010 a report by the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon outlined a seven-point action plan for women’s participation in peacebuilding (UNGA & UNSC 2010). The seven areas of its focus were: conflict resolution; post-conflict planning; post-conflict financing; gender-responsive
civilian capacity; women’s representation in post-conflict governance; rule of law; and economic recovery. It stated that women were “crucial to shoring up the three pillars of lasting peace: economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy” (UNGA & UNSC 2010, para 7). The action plan it details to achieve this goal is closely aligned with the strategies encompassed by Women, Peace and Security resolutions; namely, increasing the number of women in senior and other positions, and gender expertise at senior levels of the UN; reviewing existing protocols; demonstrating how all UN-funded programs benefit both men and women, and ensuring a percentage of UN funds go specifically to programs addressing gender and/or women; improving women’s representation in post-conflict governance; and preventing and responding to sexual and gender based violence, including improving legal support services.

At the heart of Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security in terms of how to incorporate a gender perspective are the approaches of gender mainstreaming and gender balance (Oudraat 2013, 613). The aim is to decrease gender inequality by increasing knowledge and understanding of how gender relations shape policy outcomes. In sum, the fundamental principles of mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout UN peace operations focus on women; in particular the intertwining goals of women’s empowerment and women’s security or protection. Subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security have furthered these agendas; these are Security Council Resolutions 1820 (UNSC 2008), 1888 (UNSC 2009a), 1889 (UNSC 2009b), 1960 (UNSC 2010), 2106 (UNSC 2013a) and 2122 (UNSC 2013a). Each resolution has both internal and external dimensions (Dharmapuri 2013, 6-7). That is, each seeks to improve gender equality within the UN as an institution and in domestic populations through peace operations. As Security Council resolutions they pertain specifically to the conduct of war and peace, and to the mandates adopted for peace operations.

The internal and external dimensions of Women, Peace and Security resolutions are mutually reinforcing and both are given consideration in this thesis. It is through both internal and external dimensions that the UN seeks to change gender relations and set a new standard for equality between men and women. Internally, they demand the UN as an institution increase the number of women in conflict resolution roles. This is aimed at all levels, for example, increasing female representation in peace negotiations; increasing the number of female SRSGs heading peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions; and the DPKO aims to increase the number of female peacekeepers as part of either UN Police (UNPOL) or military contingents. Externally, and this has been quite visible in Timor-Leste, the aim is to ensure gender equality in policies relating to certain populations, with the ultimate aim of instituting improved gender equality in the state after a UN peacebuilding mission has left. Both the internal and external
elements aim to help the UN understand men’s and women’s needs, interests, experiences and priorities (Dharmapuri 2013, 6).

In its entirety then, the Women, Peace and Security agenda instituted in UN peacebuilding espouses four key pillars, as detailed by Elisabeth Porter and Anuradha Mundkur (2012, 29-31): protecting women and girls in conflict and preventing gender based violence in war; incorporating a gender perspective into peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions; increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes; and ensuring gender mainstreaoming in post-conflict recovery and increasing women’s empowerment.

**Gender in post-conflict peacebuilding: theoretical frameworks**

There exists a large body of literature that engages with not only how gender is incorporated into peacebuilding, but also how gender is conceptualised in peacebuilding and the resulting implications. It is this literature that this thesis contributes to with situated analysis that demonstrates limitations in the ability of UN peacebuilding to support women’s empowerment and protection in post-conflict reconstruction; as well as limitations in the conceptualisation of ‘gender’ in peacebuilding. While the above section detailed international norms on gender and women in peacebuilding, it is important to note that ‘norms’ have a fluid, subjective nature, constructed through the discourse and practice of various actors, rather than commitments made in international treaties (Krook & True 2012). This further justifies examination of what is actually implemented in gender policy, and what the outcomes are in the host states of peacebuilding missions (see Eveline & Bacchi 2005). Norms can encompass various meanings, fit with different contexts and are framed by diverse actors (Krook & True 2012, 104-105). Certainly the platforms provided by these documents and by the rhetoric of Women, Peace and Security have been utilised by women’s rights activists and have supported important developments in the gender sensitivity of peacebuilding. However, as this thesis suggests, the ongoing implementation of the gender component of peacebuilding has mixed results.

While the goals of a gender component in peacebuilding are laudable, implementation in a positive, effective, meaningful way has not always occurred. Resolution 1325 has spawned large amounts of literature questioning its effectiveness, both real and potential, and analysing the impacts it has had since its introduction (Black 2009; Rehn 2001; Willett 2010). A not insignificant part of this literature points to the ad hoc and often lackadaisical approach of the UN and the inherent problems of enforcing such a broad mandate as Resolution 1325 calls for (Cohn 2004; Binder, Lukas & Schweiger 2008; Westendorf 2013, 4-5). Indeed, the most recent resolution on Women, Peace and Security, Resolution 2122 (2013) noted that without “a
significant implementation shift, women and women’s perspectives will continue to be underrepresented in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding for the foreseeable future.” Likewise, Sanam Anderlini describes the UN’s “Triple-A” treatment of women in peacebuilding: apathy, ad-hoc practices and amnesia (cited in Charlesworth 2008, 358-59).

These represent internal limitations – institutional limitations in ability or will to implement such a framework. External obstacles are also part of this discussion and are frequently connected to a national culture, a tension between local and international norms of gender equality (Hall 2009), “deep-seated gendered hierarchies” in the country in question (Hall & True 2009, 159) or “discriminatory social norms” at the national level (UNGA & UNSC 2010, para 22). Taken together, the twin mandates of women’s empowerment and women’s protection, and the two-pronged internal-external approach, embody a particular cultural and institutional framework for gender in international peacebuilding. ‘Gender’ – how it is defined, who it pertains to, the actions it promotes and so on – represents a particular cultural framework within UN peacebuilding (Väyrynen 2004; Carreiras 2010; Súilleabháin 2013).

From a critical perspective there are conceptual limitations with the way in which a gender perspective is implemented within UN peacebuilding missions (Hudson 2012b). A particular concern is the implicit and explicit reiteration of gender relating only to women and what are considered women’s issues. When Resolution 1325 demanded that all peacebuilding activities incorporate a gender perspective, it outlined the path for doing this as via increased representation of women at all levels, to expand the role and contribution of women to field-based operations, to ensure protection and respect for the human rights of women and girls, to train member states on the protection, rights and needs of women and to support local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous conflict resolution process that involve women. As Sandra Whitworth (2004, 139) contends, to conflate the two misses that conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding have been and will always be gendered. The attachment between ‘gender’ and ‘women’ in UN peacebuilding discourse and practice represents part of a developing “institutional orthodoxy” on women, gender and peace (Charlesworth 2008). Hilary Charlesworth (2008) outlines four elements of this developing ‘institutional orthodoxy’ on women, peace and security, one that is consistent with the findings of this thesis:

1) an assumption that women are better than men at developing and sustaining peace; 2) a tendency to assert that women are more vulnerable than men…; 3) reference to the need to include women in formal peace negotiations…; and 4) the use of the term ‘gender’ to refer only to women.
Although the addition of women is important and necessary, as women have historically been marginalised in peace processes, ‘women’ and ‘gender’ are not synonymous and conflating the two in practice sets up an awkward precedent whereby women’s visibility in peace operations is the measure of their gender sensitivity. Joining women and gender means that broader considerations of how gendered identities inform conflict and security practices are overlooked (Enloe 1989). In conflict and post-conflict zones, men’s and women’s lives will be shaped by gendered considerations as will their experience of UN peacebuilding, regardless of whether this is formally acknowledged or not.

Moreover, adding women to existing structures without necessarily changing the ways those frameworks operate takes a characteristically liberal feminist approach to women’s participation, that is, it adds women to existing decision making and governance structures without changing them, a “liberal additive” approach (Hudson 2012b). Historically women have been formally excluded from peacebuilding, yet to understand gender solely as the increased visibility of women sits uncomfortably with its broader definition of myriad roles, responsibilities and expectations that are attached to men and women and the way these are socially and institutionally produced and productive (Shepherd 2011). In a recent interview, Isabelle Geuskens, Executive Director of the Women Peacemakers Program, argued for a move beyond the process of simply adding women to existing frameworks and suggested a deeper understanding of conflict and responses to it. She stated that:

I think we are still facing a situation where we have now lots of paperwork, we have a lot of follow-up resolutions…We tend to want to make boxes that we can tick to add more women. But changing the cultures – I’m not just talking about cultures in the countries of conflict, but actually the cultures all over the world and in institutions that make decisions about war and peace. They haven’t fundamentally changed…In the end, [Resolution] 1325 I feel is about more than adding women. It’s about the practice and working towards ending wars. And that is about asking critical questions about patriarchy and the way we are dealing with violent conflict (Súilleabháin 2013).

The approach of adding women to existing institutional frameworks is often referred to as ‘box-ticking’. This approach is an internal barrier that is argued to limit the implementation of Resolution 1325 in peacebuilding, especially any transformative potential in regards to gender relations. Part of this problem is certainly that ‘gender mainstreaming’ remains poorly defined in practice (Krook & True 2012). What it means to “adopt a gender perspective” needs to be
clarified on the ground (True 2013, 2). The approach of adding women is more closely aligned with ‘gender balancing’ which seeks equal representation of women and men in governance structures, be they within the UN or within political frameworks of domestic populations. It is also arguably representative of an institutional culture that continues to treat gender as an ‘add-on’ yet fails to take it seriously as a peace and security concern for both men and women. Institutional recognition of the relationship between peacbuilding and normative gender conceptions is lacking, as others have pointed out:

In some sense, this solution of adding on gender advisors to missions already operating for years...indicates how poorly international organizations grasp the form and depth of the inequality and exclusion problems faced by women in post-conflict settings. It further demonstrates their limited appreciation of their own contribution to its maintenance (Ni Aoláin, Haynes & Cahn 2011, 117-18).

This thesis suggests that in treating gender and women as one and the same the onus of gender work is placed on women. As gender units and/or gender programs are often under resourced in peacebuilding missions and viewed as a peripheral security issue this means that gender work/women’s work continues to be marginalised. Thus women are added to peacebuilding operations yet their marginalisation is continually perpetuated.

What the literature chiefly points to then is that understanding gendered identities is fundamental to peace and security as well as to halting the precipitation of violence into ‘post’-conflict moments (Enloe 2004b; Cohn & Enloe 2003; Pankhurst 2008b). In addition, it notes that international security policy, including its gender components, has not always done well to transform normative gender conceptions that have seen women subordinated. The overall framework continues to be patriarchal and there is little consideration of masculine identities nor serious consideration of the “politics of masculinity” (Enloe 2004b). What this means then is that while ‘gender’ increasingly appears in peacebuilding discourse there is not an attendant explication of gendered identities and how they are themselves constitutive of peacebuilding practice.

Sandra Whitworth (2004, 119-47) has argued that gender mainstreaming treats women as ‘different’ and that most formal recognition of women’s vulnerabilities tends to focus on their relationship to others, such as mothers, pregnant women or as potential victims of violence. As Shepherd (2011) argues, the way that women are constructed in international peace discourse is
important, highlighting that beyond being constituted by gendered identities, peacebuilding is also gendering, recreating gendered subjects. For example, Women, Peace and Security resolutions call for women’s increased involvement in peacekeeping contingents based on the contribution they can make because they are women (Shepherd 2011). Femininity has historically been characterised as making poor soldiers, unable to meet physical and emotional expectations; it is this inherent femininity that is now utilised in calls for women’s increased numbers in the military contingents of peacebuilding operations. Women are viewed as embodying qualities that are opposed to ‘masculinity’, in particular, passivity and a tendency for non-confrontational conflict resolution (Pankhurst 2003, 162). Women are designated to take on these tasks because they are women, who can take on and reproduce essentialised ‘women’s roles.’ Thus the practice of peacebuilding can reinforce normative gender conceptions, gendering men and women into particular roles.

The essentialised approach to women and to gender detailed above is further consistent with a liberal feminist framework, which has been challenged by third wave and third world feminist authors (Mohanty 1988; Kapur 2002). Post-colonial, third-wave and third-world feminist critiques provide particular insight into the limitations of liberal feminism (Olesen 2011, 129). They suggest that not only is the categorisation of women as a singular group problematic but that it inherently structures ‘third world’ women as subordinated while ‘first world’ women – the subject of liberal feminism – represent the apex of liberal freedom and equality (Mohanty 1988, 1991). The uncritical categorisation of women is projected onto a third world/first world binary, where third world women are reified as powerless, sexually harassed and exploited while first world or western women are represented as educated and modern with the freedom to make their own decisions (Mohanty 1988, 65). These are important considerations given the nature of peacebuilding is generally international intervention into less powerful states, a situation highlighted by critical perspectives (Pugh 2004). As liberal peacebuilding enforces a liberal democratic model of governance it is unsurprising that the dominant approaches to gender and women within it have also taken a liberal method, one that seeks formal equality in liberal institutions and adds women to existing governance structures.

Gender essentialism, or making generalised claims about the rights of women, constructs a hegemonic subject that generally privileges the experiences of white, western, middle class women, “a subject that resembles the uncomplicated subject of liberal discourse” (Kapur 2002,

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6 Interestingly, they also encourage women’s inclusion as peacekeepers for the same reasons that women have historically been excluded from militaries (DeGroot 2001; Carreiras 2010).
7 Women have been performing vital support roles for militaries however, even if historically excluded from formal units and combat roles (Enloe 2000; DeGroot 2001).
6). This is particularly salient given the liberal grounding of UN peacebuilding which has often been criticised as a mechanism through which powerful states maintain a hierarchical world order and control “unruly” states (Pugh 2004). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 287) argued similarly regarding the construction of gender, noting that:

…both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow.

This tendency ignores heterogeneity in location, religion, ethnicity, experience, and socio-economic standing and freezes women in time, space and history (Mohanty 1991, 6). This is especially important given historical linkages between colonialism and the feminist narratives that were incorporated as part of justifying regimes of intervention (Hunt 2006; Orford 2002, 276).

Like liberal feminist conceptualisations, ‘women’ in the UN formulation, are similarly placed with similar needs and interests. Judith Butler (2006) provides a critique of essentialist assumptions about the homogenous categorisation of ‘women’. Butler contends that these conceptualisations lack an understanding of intersectionality, that is, an understanding of how gender, race, class, religion and sexuality all intersect, meaning there are multiple and diverse gendered identities. Moreover, it ignores privilege and power dynamics between women:

[T]his globalizing gesture [of a liberal feminist framework] has spawned a number of criticisms from women who claim that the category of ‘women’ is normative and exclusionary and is invoked with the unmarked dimensions of class and racial privilege intact. In other words, the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social and political intersections in which the concrete array of ‘women’ are constructed (Butler 2006, 19).

The work of post-colonial and third wave feminist authors then has drawn attention to the salience of recognising and understanding intersectionality as part of gendered analyses (Mohanty 2006; Rai 2011; Razack 2004). As Heidi Hudson (2005, 159) points out, “[c]ontextualized analysis forces one to move away from easy generalizations, since the nuances of power and identity politics must be taken into account.” These insights have
particular relevance in studying international peacebuilding missions because of the positionality of the interveners, the nature of UN interventions, and the context into which they are intervening. Consistent with critical perspectives that characterise peacebuilding interventions as colonial iterations, similarities can be drawn between the gender component of peacebuilding and colonial projects that espoused a rhetoric of ‘saving’ or ‘rescuing’ victimised third world women; that is, a feminist discourse was “embedded” as part of the colonial discourse (Hunt 2006). In short, feminist and gendered discourse has been utilised in legitimating the global peace and security actions of the UN (Harrington 2010, 145-46).

Third wave and third world feminisms have challenged the tendency of contemporary security discourse, including feminist security discourse, “to exhibit an awkward do-goodism in the imperialist tradition of ‘saving natives’” (Wibben 2011, 593). Likewise then the gender components of contemporary international interventions are often viewed as a ‘secret weapon’ of western imperialism (Coomaraswamy 2002). Third world women are the focus of the external dimensions of the UN’s Women, Peace and Security agenda as peacebuilding missions are launched in conflict prone developing states. Implicit and inherent then is the necessity of a post-colonial perspective. Moreover is the necessity of the voices of those who are the target population of this policy. The case study research in this thesis draws on empirical data that brings the voices of those who are the targets of the above outlined policies, programs and potential outcomes to the fore; the voices of those whose gender relations are sought to be ‘fixed’, or at the very least altered, by the gender component of UN peacebuilding.

Conclusion

This thesis builds on existing critical and feminist critical perspectives on the nature of liberal peacebuilding and international security intervention. In addition it considers how the peacebuilding presence interacts with and shapes the post-conflict environment, with especial focus on its influence over the political and social landscape in which activists (both national and international) are trying to improve gender relations and make gains for women’s equality and security. This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature for this thesis, establishing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that are drawn on in analysis of the case study of Timor-Leste. Critical perspectives on the nature of liberal peacebuilding are also relevant here, and are

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8 Feminist security studies as a field of literature has itself been accused of being myopic, predominantly characterised by the voices of white northern/western women (Shepherd 2013; Teaiwa & Slatter 2013; D’Costa & Lee-Koo 2013). Throughout this research I was cognisant of my own privilege and position as a white, middle class woman conducting research in a post-conflict state. A decision was made early to continue with the case study approach, despite this potential power imbalance, the alternative to research ‘gender’ only in the international, institutional corridors, which would excise completely the empirical data from those who have actually experienced the policy implementations of gender in peacebuilding.
discussed in the following chapter alongside analysis of the UN’s initial engagements with women’s organisations and women’s activists in Timor-Leste.

Critical and feminist perspectives on peacebuilding are fundamental to the analyses presented in this thesis, as they have drawn attention to the underlying power dynamics inherent in peace operations at both national and international levels. Moreover, these perspectives have critically engaged with peacebuilding as an international endeavour that is shaped by the global political economy and international relations. Critical literature in the field has highlighted the rigid, bureaucratic and imposing method of international peacebuilding, which at best has limited effect in terms of building peace and at worst can regress socio-political transformation. The gender component of peacebuilding is afflicted with the same issues, and the operation of gender must also be understood as sitting within the broader liberal peacebuilding matrix.

Feminist perspectives in particular have brought to the fore the necessity of understanding gendered identities for both the practice of and experience of peacebuilding operations and conceptualisations of international security. Ongoing development of the way that peacebuilding incorporates ‘gender’ and ‘women’ is essential as the post-conflict moment is a time in which women’s rights are politicised, and their security may continue to be undermined, despite the formal cessation of ‘conflict’ (Abirafeh 2005a; Pankhurst 2008a). Women’s insecurity and their lack of access to basic rights during both conflict and post-conflict times is further characterised along delineations of race, ethnicity, religion, class and even along spatial lines. Feminist security studies and international relations scholars have exposed not only women’s subordination in war and peace, but also the fundamentally gendered and gendering nature of war and security seeking behaviour, which is also true of peacebuilding. Building on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks established by this literature, this thesis draws on empirical data collected in the case-study of Timor-Leste, providing insight into the gendered nature of peacebuilding, its implications on women’s organising and activism, and the limitations in centralised, bureaucratic approaches as a means of overcoming women’s subordination and gender inequality in post-conflict moments. This is especially true as the addition of the ‘gender component’ of peacebuilding has not fundamentally challenged existing peacebuilding frameworks.
3: East Timorese women’s activism and UN engagement

This chapter analyses East Timorese women’s activism in occupation and post-occupation eras. As colonialism drew to an end and East Timorese political parties were forming in 1974, an East Timorese women’s movement also began to emerge. In occupation, East Timorese women’s activism was part of the independence movement, with activists lobbying for both the liberation of Timor-Leste and to challenge the subordinated position that women held in indigenous society. A number of contemporary women’s organisations in Timor-Leste were established during the resistance era, and continue working today towards improved equality. Therefore, women’s activism in Timor-Leste has strong roots in the political and military resistance to Indonesian occupation. In turn it was activists within these organisations that worked most closely with each UN peace operation. That it was women’s organisations that partnered with the UN regarding implementation of their gender work reflects the notion that gender work in peacebuilding can support, or at the very least is closely aligned with, women’s activism.

This chapter begins by outlining the historical development of East Timorese women’s activism and organisations in order to detail the context into which UN peacebuilding missions and their gender programs were deployed. It then goes on to examine East Timorese women’s activism post-occupation and in the presence of international peacebuilders. The chapter makes clear that East Timorese women’s activism neither started nor finished with UN peacebuilding. As the UN arrived, East Timorese women’s organisations found both another avenue through which they could lobby and another authority to challenge. The gender component of peacebuilding is necessary in order for women’s groups to have a better chance of being included in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. However, even where gender units or gender focal points become part of a post-conflict peace operation, there remain obstacles to supporting women’s activism in the post-conflict context. The analysis in this chapter argues that, with the commencement of UN peacebuilding, the way that gender was incorporated into the post-occupation reconstruction of Timor-Leste – and subsequently the activities of national women’s organisations – was characterised by the top-heavy, centralised nature of UN peacebuilding and their willingness to resource and support gender units and gender activities.

‘Traditional’ gender conceptions

Traditional gender conceptions and patriarchal values in Timor-Leste are frequently cited as barriers to improved gender equality in the country, as well as to the smooth implementation of gender programs by international actors (UN Women nd; UNFPA 2005, 7). Certainly in my
own research the word ‘culture’ frequently came back to me when discussing the difficulties that exist in improving women’s equality in Timor-Leste (discussed further in chapter seven). Exactly what these traditional roles are however is harder to define and there are variations between different ethno-sociolinguistic groups in Timor-Leste (Niner 2011a; Cristalis & Scott 2005, 11). ‘Traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ gender conceptions in Timor-Leste, like elsewhere, are fluid and have changed overtime, thus although traditions may be thousands of years old they are not static (Fox 2011, 242). Various influences such as the long period of Portuguese colonialism that was committed to Catholicism, the violent Indonesian military occupation, and the militarised international peacebuilding interventions from 1999 have all had effect on gendered relations in Timor-Leste.

In the post-occupation period, claims regarding normative gender conceptions, and what this actually refers to, have been contested. Given the multiple historical influences in Timor-Leste there are difficulties in delineating distinct boundaries around ‘traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ gender norms, which has led to contestation (Niner 2013, 2011a). Ongoing engagement with outside influences means a process of adaptation and reinterpretation, a process which James Fox (2011, 242) argues has “allowed the Timorese to both resist and assimilate” at different points in time. He continues that “the capacity to do this, however, has never been properly realised by those who have come to change Timor” (Fox 2011, 242). Anthropologists have described a masculine/feminine dichotomy where the feminine has ‘ritual authority’ and the masculine political authority (Kammen 2012; see also Niner 2011a). Relatedly, decision making is described as the domain of men (Niner 2011a; Ospina & Hohe 2001) an idea reflected during participant interviews, with women sometimes described as ‘passive’, ‘shy’ and ‘withdrawn’ in meetings and in ceremonies (Group Interview no. 2; Interview no. 4; Interview no. 10; Interview no. 5; Interview no. 6). Women’s passive role was characterised by activities such as cooking, dancing and music, whereas men’s active roles involved group discussion and decision making (Group Interview no. 2). As one former resistance member, Aurora Ximenes, described:

In the past, and as it is today in Timor, opportunities are available only for men, sure women can get an education but the majority of people believe that women should stay at home, women should not make decisions, women should not meet and speak up... (Aurora Ximenes. Interview with Michael Leach, 24 March 2010, Dili).

Ultimately what is understood as ‘traditional’ gender conceptions in Timor-Leste takes into consideration histories of patriarchal colonial authority, military occupation and international
peacebuilding endeavours (Niner 2013, 2011a). In the post-occupation period, the heavy use of the word ‘gender’ by the UN and development sectors has resulted in a backlash (see Pankhurst 2008a, 2008b) in which ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ is positioned in direct or binary opposition to ‘gender’, which is viewed as an imposition seeking to change women’s traditional status. The backlash against gender will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven, but it highlights the ongoing contestation over traditional and contemporary gender norms in Timor-Leste. East Timorese women’s activists have been seeking to challenge women’s marginalised position in Timor-Leste though throughout occupation. Emerging just prior to the occupation, an East Timorese women’s movement was cemented in activism against patriarchal attitudes, violence against women and an oppressive occupation.

**East Timorese women's activism and women's organisations**

**Under occupation**

The development of an indigenous women’s movement in Timor-Leste is inextricably linked to the fight for independence and self-determination from 1974 onwards. An analysis of East Timorese women’s activism is also a characterisation of women in the resistance struggle against Indonesian occupation; as one participant and head of a national women’s NGO explained:

> The women’s movement came from the clandestine [time], it was very strong. So that’s why we continue. And we still feel it; we still feel the spirit of the hero, the women that have already passed away. So we started from the clandestine [time] and then we learn how to strategize (Interview no. 24).

Part of the FRETILIN vernacular that was shaping East Timorese politics from 1974 included the language of equality and egalitarianism between women and men. For example, Article 14 of the Constitution that was read out by the FRETILIN Central Committee on 28 November 1975 guaranteed the “parity of rights to men and women” (CAVR 2005a, section 3.9 para 211). Socialist, Marxist and democratic theory influences were evident in Timor-Leste during decolonisation. As Aurora Ximenes, a resistance member and women’s activist recounts:

> For politics we used...Aristotle, Marx, Mao Tse-Tung...we liked to use their theory. These theories, they stress the importance of groups [collectives], these policies highlighted the importance of the [ordinary] people...There were
many theories but these are the ones I can remember (Aurora Ximenes. Interview with Michael Leach, 24 March 2010, Dili).

It was these influences that Indonesian authorities claimed made FRETILIN a Communist threat, thus justifying their occupation of the territory to the international community (Candido & Bleiker 2001). It was into this context that the first indigenous women’s organisation in Timor-Leste emerged. The Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense (OPMT – Popular Organisation of Timorese Women) was established on 6 September 1974 with a pronouncement from one of the founders and first secretary, Rosa ‘Muki’ Bonaparte (Bonaparte 1976). As the women’s wing of FRETILIN, Muki Bonaparte stated the purpose of OPMT to be “to participate directly in the struggle against colonialism and…to fight in every way the violent discrimination that Timorese women have suffered in colonial society” (Bonaparte 1976). OPMT characterised East Timorese women’s oppression as a product of two inter-related factors: “the traditional conceptions about the submission of women, and…the colonialist attitude to women” (Bonaparte 1976). As part of FRETILIN, OPMT became central to the resistance fight against Indonesian occupation from December 1975, however at its conception prior to occupation, OPMT demanded liberation from the colonial system in the wake of the FRETILIN-UDT civil war. At its establishment then, OPMT was as much about the liberation of the East Timorese people as it was about women’s emancipation; as Muki explained:

The principal objective of women participating in the revolution is not, strictly speaking, the emancipation of woman as woman, but the triumph of the revolution, and consequently, the liberation of woman as a social being who is the target of a double exploitation (Bonaparte 1976).

By ‘double exploitation’, Muki was referring to the oppression of women as East Timorese under a patriarchal colonial society, and the marginalisation of women as well within East Timorese indigenous structure. During the Indonesian invasion on 7 December, Muki was singled out along with other OPMT members and key political figures and assassinated. Aurora Ximenes recounts the execution of founding OPMT members as part of the initial Indonesian invasion:

Up until the 7 December, just over a week or so of independence, they began to take control, Indonesia... the Indonesian troops had taken over Dili... right at the start they killed the secretary-general of OPMT [Rosa Muki Bonaparte].
They killed Rosa Muki Bonaparte [near the port]. Nicolao Lobato’s 1 wife [Isabel Lobato] she was killed over here. Both of them died on the spot here...
Since they were both killed, OPMT... even if the secretary-general and others were killed [OPMT] decided: “Never mind. We will choose someone else and go to the mountains”. So, we went to the mountains, the war had already begun, the enemy was starting to surround us (Aurora Ximenes. Interview with Michael Leach, 24 March 2010, Dili).

OPMT was one of three popular mass organisations that formed the resistance base. The other two organisations were the Popular Organisation of Timorese Youth (OPJT) and the Popular Organisation of Timorese Workers (OPTT) (da Silva 2012, 147). Women’s activities during occupation were many and varied and reflected the organisational and logistical stages of the broader resistance movement under FRETILIN. OPMT was organised consistent with the administrative sectors of FRETILIN and provided support networks of women, spaces for women to work together and the opportunity for women to engage in active combat and clandestine activities (Alves, Abrantes & Reis 2005; da Silva 2010, 152-159; Cristalis & Scott 2005). Women also made up a majority of the clandestine and civilian support base (Wigglesworth 2010a). In the early years of occupation, OPMT members worked in the bases of resistance in which FRETILIN had organised the areas of Timor-Leste under its control into six administrative sectors (CAVR 2005a, section 5.2; da Silva 2012). Indonesia’s military invasion had caused mass internal displacement, and FRETILIN was left to provide for the large number of refugees in these areas, a task which OPMT’s activities were central to:

If we prepared cornmeal we would distribute it to all of the groups...we had control over health and hygiene. We did not count the number of people we had, as there were so many people. Seven or eight households would make up one section...it was called a squadron from a military perspective. In one squadron, there was a commander and one representative of OPMT. All of us desired independence (Soares in Sequeira & Abrantes 2012, 52).

Within OPMT, commissions were established which dealt with logistics, education, health and hygiene, and crèches (Alves, Abrantes & Reis 2005, 17-18). These methods were central to the socialisation and nationalisation of resistance ideologies and continuance. OPMT’s activities were politicised and militarised in response to firstly colonial structures, and then to Indonesian

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1 FRETILIN leader, Prime Minister of independent Timor-Leste from 28 November 1975 – 7 December 1975, killed in December 1978.
occupation. As Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes (2009) explains, women were at the forefront of resistance to the ‘Indonesianisation’ of Timor by maintaining East Timorese culture and tradition and socialising their children throughout the occupation period.2

The bases of resistance period came to an end in 1978 as the occupation intensified and Indonesia was able to consolidate its control over Timor-Leste. The FRETILIN Central Committee therefore decided that civilians could surrender and FALINTIL, the armed wing of FRETILIN, should continue the armed resistance front from the jungles (CAVR 2005a, section 5.3). OPMT members adjusted to the changing context, some members remaining in the jungles with FALINTIL, others organising from surrendered areas to continue to provide food, medicine, information and shelter to communities, and to those who remained in the jungle.

Through the structure of OPMT, East Timorese women “bore arms alongside men, provided logistical support, carried out a broad range of clandestine political…activities, as well as taking primary responsibility for the well-being of family and community development often in the absence of men” (de Fatima 2002). There are some accounts of women taking up arms in the fight against occupation, such as reports of a brigade of women recruited in Bobonaro in 1975 (da Silva 2012, 160; Loney 2012). However such accounts are more limited when compared to those of women taking on domestic tasks, owing to a lack of documentary material as well as patriarchal perceptions of women (Loney 2012). There was perhaps hesitancy among resistance leaders for women to actually engage in armed combat (Loney 2012). Accounts of OPMT members who were trained in armed combat also allude to such hesitancy within FRETILIN leadership, as well as the gendered nature of who could participate in armed combat and when:

> The women participating in the adult literacy school should attend training…on how to operate a weapon because this war will take time and, if all the men die, women will have to carry weapons to continue the war until we get independence (Soares in Sequeira & Abrantes 2012, 49).

Whether it was or is considered ‘armed’ resistance, the role that women and men played outside of FALINTIL and the armed front was crucial.

OPMT did fight against the discrimination experienced by women in Timor-Leste. OPMT spoke out against polygamy and barlake – most commonly translated as dowry or bride price3 –

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2 However, this meant that East Timorese women were “essentially complicit in supporting the very cultural mores which would impede the implementation of changes to address gender inequality in Timorese society” post-occupation (Corcoran-Nantes 2009, 170).
both of which were outlawed within FRETILIN for being exploitative (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 29; Pinto & Jardine 1997, 47). OPMT’s manifesto, written by Muki Bonaparte in 1975, identifies the causes of women’s oppression as both cultural and structural (da Silva 2012, 149). In particular is the singling out of *barlake* which is described in the manifesto as “no longer about the alliance of families [but] instead had become a social philosophy and practice depriving women of their dignity” (da Silva 2012, 149). Muki claimed that *barlake* reduced women into “a mere object for purchase or sale” (Bonaparte 1976). Debates around *barlake* continue today within Timor-Leste and the practice has been heavily criticised by the international community. The Women’s Charter of Rights presented to the Constituent Assembly in 2001 (to be discussed in more detail in later chapters) included an article calling for the regulation of *barlake* and polygamy (see Cristalis & Scott, appendix 4, 180-81). *Barlake* was also a common theme throughout the Constitutional Consultations conducted in 2001, some districts wanting regulation of the marriage system to prevent exploitation while others were more inclined towards abolishment (Constitutional Commission 2001). Regardless, it highlights the ongoing discussion in Timor-Leste regarding gendered issues that may impact on women’s full enjoyment of equal rights. It seems that the practice has become a cultural marker for gender relations in Timor-Leste and indeed its basic components appear at odds with western feminist principles.

The language of women’s rights and equality in this period was that of women’s emancipation. During the resistance, FRETILIN provided education in literacy and politics and the emancipation of women was part of this socio-political program (CAVR 2005a, section 5.2, para 39, 43). The final CAVR report describes women’s emancipation programs and provides insight into the ways in which gendered roles were utilised in support of the resistance struggle:

> Women were encouraged to get involved in education, health, agricultural production and the production of items to be used by the military… Crèches were built in order to make it possible for women to carry out these activities.
> Men and women took turns in looking after the children in crèches…

³ Although *barlake* is commonly translated to mean dowry or bride price, Sara Niner (2012) has pointed out that this is a mistaken translation: “The term ‘dowry’ refers to an endowment by the bride’s family, transferred with her in marriage, representing her natal inheritance in patriarchal societies which have no tradition of independent inheritance for women…Bride-price…is a gift of payment from the groom’s family to the bride’s family, understood as compensation for the loss to the bride’s kin group of her labour and fertility…” (Niner 2012, 141). *Barlake* on the other hand represents reciprocal exchange: “…you give a present, you receive a present more or less the same value…But your presents are of a different kind then the present you receive, for example, I give you live things, you give me dead things. If you give me *tais*, gold, money, I give you pigs, cows, this is life” (Interview no. 22). For a more in depth account of *barlake* and its centrality in indigenous marriage practices see Niner (2012) and Hicks (2012).
areas, courses were run to prepare women for marriage. For example, OPMT ran a course in the [central north] sector. The aim was to create nationalist families with respect for men’s and women’s rights...Through these courses future brides also learned to challenge colonial and feudal attitudes and preconceptions about women, and to defend the dignity of both women and men (CAVR 2005a, section 5.2, para 43-44).

Women’s emancipation was ideologically linked to the independence struggle and the emancipation of Timor-Leste from the occupying force of Indonesia and the long history of colonialism. Under the umbrella of OPMT, East Timorese women “put the values of women’s emancipation into practice in the service of the people in the struggle for liberation” (Alves, Abrantes & Reis 2005, 19). Far from simply being on the receiving end of an egalitarian ideology, East Timorese women defined their own needs and demanded their own rights, articulated both as part of the resistance and as their experiences of occupation and colonialism. Despite the emergence of a language of equality during this period, women continued to be subordinated within FRETILIN and only three women sat on FRETILIN’s Central Committee (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 27; da Silva 2012, 148). Patriarchal relations and traditional conceptions of women were not entirely put aside during the occupation period.

In her fieldwork in Lospalos, Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes (2009) spoke with resistance era OPMT members and found that women were essentially ‘multi-tasking’: they were part of every stage and structure of the resistance front, but also maintained responsibilities that were more consistent with traditional roles, in particular those related to domesticity and child rearing. As the resistance struggle wore on, FRETILIN’s commitment to women’s equality diminished and women “had to straddle the uneasy divide between their right to equality and their central role in maintaining Timorese culture and traditions in the wake of Indonesian invasion” (Braithwaite, Charlesworth & Soares 2012, 170). This pattern has been observed elsewhere, where women’s rights are rhetorically supported in national liberation struggles, where women are symbolically used in support of the nation and nationalism, and fluid gender roles are utilised in support of such struggles. In practice though, commitment to women’s equality remains comparatively marginalised, garnering little action beyond rhetorical support. Once the conflict or liberation struggle draws to an end though, women’s rights are marginalised and women’s platform is lost from the post-conflict political agenda (Pettman 1996, 33-45). In Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony and support base for East Timorese resistance fighters, the revolutionary FRELIMO party declared women as a fundamental necessity for the revolution and its victory. Yet the political elite abandoned women’s issues and women’s gendered experiences of conflict
obscured once independence was achieved in the interests of national reconciliation (Sørensen 1998, 7; Cristalis & Scott 2005, 111). More recently, Krista Hunt (2006) has termed such tendencies as “embedded feminism”, whereby a feminist discourse is incorporated into political projects that ultimately subordinate or subvert feminist goals and projects.

In Timor-Leste gender roles were utilised to support the resistance structure, which itself was imbued with patriarchal authority. At its establishment in 1975 OPMT called for the liberation of women from the traditions that subordinated them; this platform was utilised to legitimise FRETILIN’s unified resistance front. Former OPMT member Aurora Ximenes has explained that:

FRETILIN reflected on this situation [women’s marginalisation within Timor-Leste] and said: “This cannot be so. Women also must have rights. Women can speak up. Women can be political. It is better for them to liberate themselves”…This was the language that FRETILIN used, women must liberate themselves from culture, liberate themselves from the customs and traditions that tie them down…In order to do this women have to participate in politics, they must be socialised and raise political awareness amongst the people, so that everyone awakens to the need to improve oneself… for this we need independence. Because for almost 500 years, Portugal ruled over us and the situation of women remained the same (Aurora Ximenes. Interview with Michael Leach, 24 March 2010, Dili).

During the 1990s, as demonstrations against Indonesian occupation began to occur more publicly, women also took this opportunity to establish civil society organisations that focused mostly on the kinds of violence women were experiencing under Indonesian occupation (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 48). Perhaps the most well-known of these is FOKUPERS (Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Lorosae – East Timorese Women’s Communications Forum) which was established in 1997. FOKUPERS is a grass roots women’s advocacy organisation and was “one of only a handful of pre-referendum non-church NGOs trying to operate in a hostile environment” (Conway 2010, xviii). OPMT’s sister organisation for youth was established in 1998, the Grupo Feto Foinsa’e Timor Lorosa’e (GFFTL – East Timor Young Women’s Group) and also continues its activities today.

In 1998, the Conselho Nacional da Reconstrução Timorensse (CNRT – National Congress of Timorese Reconstruction) was established as a united resistance front which was to include
members from all political affiliations, not simply FRETILIN. With CNRT’s establishment, the *Organização da Mulher Timorense* (OMT – Organisation of Timorese Women) was established which, as the women’s wing of CNRT, welcomed women from all political parties as well as those with no political affiliation (de Fatima 2002). OPMT had been part of the lobbying for the inclusion of all political parties under one umbrella and therefore in the resultant CNRT. The establishment of OMT meant the transformation and broadening of OPMT’s organisation and activities, and OMT has built on the original structure of OPMT. In 2002, OMT had approximately 70,000 women members organised into over 3000 secretariats in each *aldeia* (hamlet or small village) (de Fatima 2002). Each section could operate independently based on local priorities and initiatives (de Fatima 2002).

During the occupation period, previously inaccessible space for women became more open, meaning women took on roles outside of traditional gender dichotomies in support of the resistance. Although many losses are suffered in conflict, war can offer opportunities to women for them to change societal structures (Bop 2001; Manchanda 2001). Speaking out against *barlake* and polygamy clearly demonstrated the capacity of the East Timorese women’s movement to critically engage with domestic issues of women’s equality. This was not simply a women’s auxiliary role to the independence movement, but also a movement that demanded changes within the structure of East Timorese society. As explained by one East Timorese women’s activist: “we understood and were aware that this is a patriarchal system in Timor-Leste, even during the war” (Interview no. 26).

Yet the ability to advocate for women’s rights as an independent issue was heavily proscribed in the occupation environment. Subversive activism was occurring around human rights in Timor-Leste generally, as a means to oppose the oppressive military occupation, and this included women’s rights. East Timorese student activists in Indonesia came into contact with the Indonesian women’s movement which further developed the East Timorese movement, and women were supported by activists in Indonesia (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 46). More broadly, the Indonesian presence in Timor-Leste has been a historical factor in shaping gender conceptions in the country. One participant, the former head of a national NGO, stated that the Indonesian presence in some ways opened up East Timorese women’s activism:

> The war liberated women, the Indonesian occupation, because Indonesian women were very active. I could see, you know, from the head of the [Indonesian] women’s organisation Dharma Wanita, who operated [in Timor-Leste]...because it was the public service every ministry, every department
had a Dharma Wanita [representative], it was the national women’s organisation. But here they were very, very active (Interview no. 21).

Moreover, activists within Timor-Leste maintained transnational connections, in Indonesia and further abroad. East Timorese women’s activists were connected to international women’s rights activism and feminist theories during the occupation. Key female leaders, such as Muki Bonaparte, had studied abroad and brought feminist theory that they had encountered overseas back to Timor-Leste (Cristails & Scott 2005). There are evident ideological links between the women’s movement in Timor-Leste and women’s movements in the Lusophone world (Loney 2015). East Timorese women who established and worked in NGOs during the 1990s lobbied the international community and the UN specifically to bring attention to the consequences of occupation generally, and for women specifically. East Timorese women’s groups had links with solidarity groups and also with women’s movements internationally, especially within Indonesia. Former Secretary of OPMT and a founding member of FOKUPERS, Domingas ‘Micato’ Fernandes Alves, described her work in bringing international attention to the suffering of women in occupied Timor-Leste:

I started sending articles abroad about the situation of women in Timor-Leste. I wrote to a Timorese woman in Sydney…I wrote to the French President, François Mitterand, and to the United Nations. In 1995 I compiled a report about the suffering of Timorese women in the resistance [and] under the control of Indonesian armed forces…The report was submitted to the Beijing women’s conference. I was subjected to interrogation twice for sending documents abroad (Alves 2010, 84).

East Timorese women in the diaspora were freer to organise politically than those who remained in Timor-Leste and were able to attend international conferences on women, such as those organised by the UN throughout the UN’s decade for women (Roynestad 2003, 3). The connection to international movements is demonstrated by East Timorese women’s representation at international conferences including the Nairobi Conference in 1985, which closed the UN decade for women, and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 from which came the Beijing Platform for Action. A message sent to the Beijing Conference from East Timorese women in the clandestine resistance reads:

We appeal to you, as women, as mothers, as sisters and as wives, to say a word and to act in your own countries, in all your capacities, power and strength, for
the dignity of East Timor, for the dignity and freedom of all the East Timorese women…Our fight for freedom will go on as long as there is no freedom to live as free human beings, as women, as individuals, as a nation and as people of East Timor (Lighur 1995).

Such transnational women’s gatherings presented another platform for East Timorese women’s groups to lobby for independence. The conferences offered opportunities to East Timorese women’s groups to further disseminate information about life under Indonesian occupation and Timor-Leste’s desire for self-determination, as well as increase attention to the particular consequences of occupation for women. Through attendance at these conferences, East Timorese women learnt about women’s struggles and strategies for self-determination in other areas. In turn East Timorese women found support from others with their own concerns for their struggles (Hill 2012, 218), as the UN world conferences on women were attended by diverse groups of women from diverse histories, classes, ethnicities and sexualities. Interestingly, it was also these conferences where that lay the bedrock for important developments in international gender norms, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Namibia Plan of Action and Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. East Timorese women would find themselves the focus of the resultant policy approaches in the post-occupation era under successive UN peacebuilding missions.

In the lead up to the referendum, East Timorese women’s groups continued to advocate via available international platforms. In 1999, FOKUPERS presented a report to UNAMET head Ian Martin on sexual violence being committed against East Timorese women (Interview no. 20). In the weeks leading up to and immediately after the 1999 referendum, FOKUPERS documented over 180 cases of rape in the districts around Dili (Schmaedick 2001). With the establishment of UNAMET, East Timorese women’s organisations were deeply involved in campaigning around the referendum. In interviews with members of FOKUPERS it was noted that their activities shifted somewhat during this period:

So the work of FOKUPERS increased, because before we just [accompany and advocate for victims of violence]. But then we were also providing education for those who chose to go to the referendum. We explained to these people their rights and also [how] to get protection from the Indonesian military…and we also disseminated information that for the Timorese people, independence is the best way for Timor (Interview no. 20).
This demonstrates that some women’s organisations did not situate their advocacy exclusively in terms of women’s rights activism, or necessarily based on gender. Their activism was grounded in their experience as an individual working collectively for independence and for the dignity of both East Timorese women and men. Women’s organising is not a straightforward project of dismantling culture, nor does it inherently operate as opposed to existing indigenous socio-political structures. Rather, women’s organising in Timor-Leste during the occupation was fundamental to the resistance project that fought for self-determination, and in that way the structure of OPMT reflected the structure of indigenous society. Accounts of OPMT and OMT activities during this period move seamlessly between women’s activities as part of the resistance and women’s advocacy for women’s individual and collective rights and security (see Conway 2010; Sequeira & Abrantes 2012; Winters 1999). It is impossible to detail women’s activism in Timor-Leste without situating it within occupation history. Essentially, the dignity of East Timorese women and their ability to exercise their rights had to begin with the lifting of the military occupation.

After the occupation, some authors have noted recognition of women’s roles in the resistance in Timor-Leste has been piecemeal at best, tending to acknowledge only their contributions in feminised non-combative roles, such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children and being part of the chains of communication and supply. While some women did take part in the armed resistance, it is also true that this activity has been largely ignored in dominant narratives of armed resistance in Timor-Leste (Loney 2012). In her account of women and non-violent resistance in Timor-Leste, Christine Mason (2005) suggests that women’s roles in the resistance were an “extension of female domestic duties” as auxiliary contributors to the liberation struggle. From this perspective they are seen as essentially supporting the ‘male’ (armed) resistance. It is true that women in Timor-Leste were more engaged in clandestine activities as opposed to armed resistance. Yet, as one participant explained, the armed resistance wing could not have survived or been successful without this clandestine support base, which involved both women and men (Interview no. 17).

The degree to which this is considered auxiliary depends on the value that one attaches to these roles. Certainly in the current political climate within Timor-Leste, greater importance is given to those who “held a weapon”, which marginalises women from contemporary national narratives of resistance and patriarchal war heroism (Interview no. 13). Women resistance leaders have spoken of being frustrated by the fact that their role in independence has been forgotten by the male elite in contemporary Timor-Leste (Bisoi, interview in Cristalis & Scott 2005, 40-41). This can also be understood in the broader inequality or elitism that permeates
contemporary resistance narratives. Men and women alike in the student and clandestine resistance fronts, as opposed to the armed resistance front, have felt their contributions have been sidelined post-occupation. Henri Myrttinen (2012) in his research on martial arts groups and youth gangs found that a number of members were disaffected former veterans and youth whose role in the resistance has been downplayed, and subsequently they felt excluded from contemporary independent Timor-Leste.

**Post-occupation**

Clearly East Timorese women’s activism began prior to the arrival of the UN and it was into this context that UN peacebuilding missions deployed from 1999 (see Smith 2014). Although East Timorese women’s activism already existed, the arrival of UNTAET and subsequent peacebuilding missions would influence the landscape in which East Timorese women advocated for their rights and inclusion. This is not just because the UN propagated a particular gender framework, but also because the end of an oppressive military occupation meant that women and men could engage in human rights activism openly through political parties, increased donor funding for NGOs and a large international presence ostensibly there to provide humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction. In the UNTAET era, East Timorese women’s activists focused on the issues of female illiteracy, the absence of women in public life and violence against women, all in the context of a deeply Catholic society (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 334). There were though, throughout each UN mission, challenges to effective implementation of gender policy (Charlesworth & Wood 2001, 2002; Ospina 2006a; Olsson 2009). Moreover, the presence of UN peacebuilding can conversely undermine women’s empowerment and women’s post-conflict security.

As well as advocating for women’s rights post-occupation, women’s groups in Timor-Leste also wanted to be involved in international peacemaking processes leading up to and after the 1999 referendum. In 2000, an umbrella women’s secretariat was established, Rede Feto, which brought together 16 women’s organisations to improve coordination amongst them. Filomena dos Reis, spokesperson of Rede Feto at the time, stated that the umbrella organisation was “representative of a broad cross-section of society as there are mass-based organisations with national membership down to village level [like OMT], cultural, income-generating/small business and rights based organisations” as well as organisations with political party affiliation, such as OPMT (in Cristalis & Scott 2005, 76). In 2000, a statement released by Rede Feto expressed frustration with existent barriers to women’s inclusion in post-occupation reconstruction and peacemaking. Prior to the referendum, East Timorese women were largely excluded from UN peacemaking processes prior to and including the 5 May Agreements. In the
1990s, a series of intra-East Timorese peace negotiations had been taken over by the UN. East Timorese women fought to break into these dialogues. In the first round of UN organised intra-East Timorese Dialogues, only one East Timorese woman was included and the final round had increased that participation to three out of forty-five:

Although we also participated and suffered in the struggle our participation in peacemaking has been limited. But we have embraced and welcomed the small opportunities given and have made every effort not to be forgotten or overlooked (Rede Feto 2000).

East Timorese women’s organisations were therefore struggling against inequality in international peace processes, as well as at home and under occupation. As Emily Roynestad (2003, 3-4) describes, “neither the UN nor East Timorese male political leaders demonstrated very much seriousness in addressing this issue [of women’s marginalisation in the peace process].” Following a series of district consultations, the First National Women’s Congress was held in Dili in 2000, organised by Rede Feto. From this first national congress a Platform for Action was drawn up, modelled on the Beijing Platform for Action.

The East Timorese Platform for Action focused on lobbying UNTAET and CNRT to include women and, particularly for the UN, to maintain their commitments to gender inclusivity and equality in peacebuilding processes. The National Women’s Congress has since continued, with one being held in 2004, 2008 and most recently 2013. Each congress produces a new Platform for Action that is designed as a road map for the coming four years of advocacy. Each subsequent Platform for Action addresses issues raised in district consultations and considered principle areas of concern for East Timorese women’s equality, participation and security. Four district consultations take place prior to the congress in order to ensure that the themes discussed were close to being nationally representative. Through the duration of the national congress, discussions take place around set themes. Themes in the 2013 congress included health, human trafficking, and economic and environmental concerns. Following the First National Congress in 2000, women’s groups lobbied at the CNRT Congress in August 2000 where a resolution on women’s rights was adopted unanimously (Pires 2004). This resolution called on both UNTAET and the future government of Timor-Leste to support women in decision making and established a foundation for laws against sexual and domestic violence. It explicitly refers to polygamy and discrimination within traditional practices (CNRT Resolution in Cristalis & Scott 2005, appendix 3, 179). Both this document and the Platform for Action
from the First National Women’s Congress were important lobbying points for East Timorese women, especially to the UN transitional authority (Pires 2004, 4; Cristalis & Scott 2005, 77).

In the post-occupation period some divisions have reportedly emerged in the East Timorese women’s movement. One division in particular followed a broader pattern that was occurring in the post-occupation environment: emerging tension between those who had remained in Timor-Leste and lived under occupation and those who had been part of the diaspora, who were returning and wanting to take part in the reconstruction of the country. This is best characterised as resentment over the relative contribution of each group to independence and subsequent claims to authority (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 76). For example, when Milena Pires was made Rede Feto’s representative on the National Council, ‘insiders’ “disliked the appointment of a former exile, irrespective of her abilities” (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 76). Widening inequality in Timor-Leste (see Wallis 2013) has also shaped relationships within the women’s movement, with some interview participants speaking of tensions between urban-based women’s NGOs and rural-based women’s activists (Interview no. 26; Interview no. 30). One participant explained that some rural women activists viewed the 2013 women’s congress as a meeting of “minister’s wives” (Interview no. 30). These issues will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapters, as the thesis considers how UN peacebuilding endeavours have themselves been characterised by rural-urban tensions, especially as the mission were centralised in the urban centre with peacebuilding dividends generally benefiting elite cohorts.

In her work on the role of women in UN peacebuilding, Emily Roynestad (2003) also found that in the lead up to the 2004 Congress, there were questions over the legitimacy of Rede Feto as a “national” women’s network. Nonetheless, women’s groups and organisations continued their activism in the post-occupation period. The form this activism took was different to that during the occupation period due to the changing context of the end of the occupation period: the lifting of an oppressive military occupation. The end of occupation meant that individuals and collectives were freer to advocate around human rights issues, including women’s rights, where previously such activism was difficult in a hostile environment. In addition the UN presence, especially as transitional authority immediately after the referendum, shaped the socio-political landscape on which East Timorese women’s groups were advocating for improved equality, both within Timor-Leste generally and within peacebuilding specifically.

**Getting gender on the UN agenda in Timor-Leste**

A limitation in the design of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, and one that had implications for each missions’ relationship with the women’s movement, was that each peacebuilding mission
was highly centralised, meaning they were Dili-based. UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste has focused its attentions more readily to the national space, thus reflecting the liberal peacebuilding model which seeks to reconstruct a state with a central administration that exercises authority over a bounded territory, the “Westphalian state” (Paris 2002, 654). In Timor-Leste, there is an increasing gap between the urbane capital and largely neglected rural populations who mostly rely on forms of near-subsistence agriculture and meagre seasonal incomes to survive (Wallis 2013a). One limitation of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste has been that the associated activities and outcomes have remained centralised in the capital, Dili. For example, the economic benefits of UN peacebuilding have largely remained in Dili as it became the “centre for economic activity due to the significant international presence” and even then distributed unevenly (Moxham & Caparic 2013, 3124). A study released in 2005 on the economic impact of UNTAET and UNMISET found that 80 per cent of the economic benefits had remained in Dili with a majority of the local job creation occurring in the centre (Carnahan, Gilmore & Rahman 2005, iii; Moxham & Caparic 2013, 3124). In addition the main benefactors were the well-educated and those with some wealth already (Carnahan, Gilmore & Rahman 2005, iii).

This reflects critical perspectives on peacebuilding that point to UN peacebuilding as a top-heavy practice with inadequate mechanisms to ensure national and local participation. As well as being centralised the form of UN peacebuilding in different case studies will reflect a similar, if not same, model, meaning that the same model is assumed to work in varied contexts (Lemay-Herbert 2011). In the case of Timor-Leste centralisation also refers to the fact that much of the peacebuilding benefits were centralised in the capital Dili. For example, two interview participants noted that for many in rural, district or outlying areas UN peacebuilding missions were abstracted from their day-to-day lives (Interview no. 10; Interview no. 14). UNTAET went some way to alleviate this and had advisors in each of Timor-Leste’s districts, including gender advisors. UNTAET also established (much criticised) village and sub-district councils with the rationale that this would be a mechanism for promoting effective local participation in village development and the disbursement of funds (UNTAET 2000a).

However as a transitional administration UNTAET neither consulted widely nor sufficiently hired East Timorese, which has been suggested as a mechanism to safeguard UNTAET’s own centralised authority (Chopra 2000). This led to vociferous calls for a process of ‘Timorisation’ and ultimately to increasing demand for the mission’s departure. Critics of western intervention

4 UNTAET quickly came under pressure to increase national participation and they responded with a process of ‘Timorisation’. This process included establishing the National Consultative Council (NCC) as “the primary mechanism through which East Timorese representatives [could] participate in the decision making process during the transitional period” (UNTAET 2000b, 5). By June, UNTAET public
under liberal peacebuilding frequently cite the lack of ‘local ownership’ of reconstruction policy and its implementation (MacGinty 2008; Jabri 2013). MacGinty (2008) suggests that even where both international and local mechanisms co-exist, the international is likely to ‘co-opt’ indigenous processes, rather than work alongside them. In Timor-Leste even though there were attempts to restructure indigenous society to facilitate future decentralisation – and following strident calls for ‘Timorisation’ – resources have remained allocated from the top-down and local authority weakened (Hughes 2009a, 2009b). During the transition period, both UNTAET and the returning Portuguese-speaking East Timorese elite were concerned about the “kinds of leaders thrown up by war” and thus were reluctant to allow too much authority in village level leaders (Hughes 2009b, 225).

Particular frustrations mounted around certain issues: the lack of involvement of East Timorese nationals, the visible wage gaps between international personnel and East Timorese staff, the pace of development – although development was to be led by the World Bank – and what many took to be insensitivity towards Timor-Leste’s recent trauma (Chopra 2002; Bowles & Chopra 2008; Federer 2005; Interview no. 9; Interview no. 22). UNTAET’s approach has been characterised as a ‘blank state’ or ‘empty shell’ approach, in which UNTAET operated on the assumption that Timor-Leste was an ‘empty’ territory, lacking structure and governance and thus it required re-building from scratch (Traub 2000; Beauvais 2001). This had implications for the degree to which existing organising structures would be recognised as legitimate partners, including women’s collectives such as OPMT and OMT. The implications of this issue for women’s organising are examined in more detail in chapter four in relation to empowerment. Explicitly describing such an approach – and the implied definition of a ‘blank’ or ‘empty’ state being a lack of liberal democratic institutions – UNTAET’s SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello stated:

information releases were calling this ‘accelerated Timorisation’, which involved SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello offering two models of transitional government to East Timorese leaders, a ‘technocratic’ or ‘political’ model, both of which had primary goal to ‘Timorise’ the administration (UNTAET 2000c, 5). ‘Softer’ options included the distribution of *Tais Timor*, a UNTAET publication designed to inform the national populace and increase public information access.

5 The relationship with the World Bank definitely characterised UNTAET’s engagement with Timor-Leste, and reportedly East Timorese felt that lending from the bank was done in a secretive and authoritarian manner, with the World Bank shaping development priorities (AID/WATCH 2001). The World Bank’s engagement in Timor-Leste has been widely criticised, including by the bank itself (Moxham 2005; Knowlton 2011), and this criticism has also been directed at UNTAET, which many felt failed to adequately respond to the urgent development situation of post-occupation Timor-Leste. In reality however UNTAET’s budget was for the DPKO managed mission, meaning that it could not spend UNTAET’s funds on reconstruction efforts and was solely for UN facilities and salaries (Power 2008, 314). UNTAET’s total budget sat at more than US$600 million (Power 2008, 314).
What we found was a devastated country…There was no judiciary, no education system, no police, no defence force, no representative forms of government. Nothing, nothing, nothing. So, we determined our priorities, not in an arbitrary manner, but by responding to what we felt was needed in the early days of the mission…The institutional situation we found the country in was not just a ground-zero, but was sometimes even below that (in Millet & Rathinasabapathy 2001; emphasis added).

In practice, this approach meant that East Timorese were given few jobs with the UN and were little consulted by UNTAET. Women’s organisations, and individual women seeking employment, were also marginalised in this respect: of the already small number of East Timorese employed by UNTAET, only six per cent were women (Schmaedick 2001). UNTAET staff were internationally recruited with no consideration of domestic expertise (Suhrke 2001). The approach of UNTAET and its holding of highly centralised executive authority have led a number of critics to frame the mission as an iteration of colonialism, an understandable conclusion given the scale and scope of UNTAET’s mandates and where decision making authority lay:

As UN administrator, [SRSG Sergio de Mello] knew that he would have to make a wide range of decisions in a hurry. Airports and ports had to be opened, clean water procured, health care provided, schools resuscitated, a currency created, relations with Indonesia normalized, a constitution drafted, an official language chosen, and tax, customs, and banking systems devised. Policies that normally evolved over hundreds of years would have to be decided within months of arrival – by him and his team (Power 2008, 304; emphasis added).

Initiating engagement on the assumption that nothing existed undermined any potential of the transitional administration recognising existing social and political structures (Lemay-Herbert 2011; Chopra 2002). As Chopra (2002, 981) notes “there is a profound difference between anarchy defined as the absence of a national executive, legislature and judiciary, and the actual breakdown of indigenous social structures.” Both the UN and the first diaspora led government neglected to draw on existing indigenous and resistance governance structures (Bowles & Chopra 2008), and this included the broad-based women’s organisations of OPMT and OMT. The situation in Timor-Leste after 1999 undoubtedly required robust humanitarian assistance, yet a lighter hand could well have been played elsewhere. Even the Joint Assessment Mission
Report completed in 1999 and taken to the Tokyo Donor’s Conference noted that the institutional capacity at the local level was not so severely damaged and that traditional and resistance structures in local villages remained functional (JAM 1999, 237). Instead in Timor-Leste “interventionary ambitions were magnified, rather than tempered” as it was viewed as the perfect test site for experimentation with post-conflict reconstruction (Hughes 2009b, 95).

Timor-Leste was viewed as an ideal testing ground due to a number of factors, including: the fact that the aggressor parties had departed; and, that under the CNRT, the East Timorese people appeared politically united with Xanana Gusmão advocating reconciliation internally and with Indonesia. In addition, all the countries on the Security Council were united behind the aims of the UN’s mission in Timor-Leste (Power 2008, 303), an uncommon occurrence. This led SRSG Sergio de Mello to describe Timor-Leste in 1999 as “a pretty perfect petri-dish” (Power 2008, 303), therefore conceptually assuming that if Timor-Leste was a blank, empty state, then there were no logical, immediate challenges to building viable liberal democratic institutions. As Peter Galbraith, head of UNTAET’s Political Affairs Unit, stated:

East Timor is a test of whether the international community can create a stable, democratic country...Substantial funds are pledged. If the UN can’t succeed here, it may not be able to succeed anywhere (cited in DeVoss 2000).

Also problematic in a top-heavy approach is whom each mission engages with and supports. Jarat Chopra (2000), former head of UNTAET’s Office of District Administration, argues that UNTAET deliberately resisted East Timorese involvement in order to ensure its continued influence and prominence. Chopra (2000, 32) suggests that the planning of UNTAET in New York involved “no genuine contact with, or participation by, East Timorese representatives”, thus laying the groundwork for an ongoing exclusionary mission. Samantha Power suggests that SRSG Sergio de Mello saw his dominant priorities as building governing structures and cultivating ties with Xanana Gusmão who he viewed as the “unquestioned political leader” (Power 2008, 305). Chopra (2000, 32) argues that Sergio de Mello relied almost exclusively on this personal relationship to guide the mission.

More broadly this resulted in institutional collaboration between CNRT and UNTAET as UNTAET “pragmatically decided who appeared to be the most legitimate local leaders that could assist them carry out their mandate” (Niner 2009, 215). The sense of exclusion carried over into UNMISET and was a key reason why UNMISET often failed to cement its legitimacy in the eyes of the East Timorese population (Ishizuka 2003). Others have noted that the “the
failure of UNTAET to successfully link international institutions with the local context was directly related to the difficulties of legitimizing the UN’s presence during UNMISET” and that “these effects [were] still felt during UNMIT” (Pushkina & Maier 2012, 338). The state of the UN missions in Timor-Leste would have equally effected women’s organisations and the success or limitations of their activism. Later chapters of this thesis will explore in more detail how the UN’s fostering of political authority in Timor-Leste impacted women’s roles in post-occupation reconstruction and their relative share of decision making. Moreover, the centralised nature of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste had impacts on women’s organisations that partnered with the UN and their relationships with those outside of the urban, national space.

The widespread destruction in Timor-Leste following the independence referendum found the UN preparing for a complex mission with little precedent. Although UNTAET’s establishment pre-dated the adoption of Resolution 1325 a gender unit was allowed for in the initial planning stages. The office was “disappeared” before UNTAET began its work, reportedly due to budgetary constraints (Whittington 2003). Its eventual reinstatement occurred not without reluctance and was a direct result of lobbying by East Timorese women with support from some key women in the UN: in particular, Angela King, at the time Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; and Mary Robinson, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 340-41). In February 2000, East Timorese women met with then Secretary General Kofi Annan to draw his attention to the need for a gender unit in UNTAET. Also in February 2000, Mary Robinson visited Timor-Leste and “caused embarrassment and a subsequent rethinking about the adequacy of UNTAET’s response to East Timorese women’s concerns when she asked about the existence of a unit devoted to gender” (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 341). It was re-established by mid-2000 within the Governance and Public Administration (GPA) pillar, the key pillar of the mission that would eventually hand over responsibility to East Timor’s first independent government in May 2002 (Whittington 2003, 1284-85; Roynestad 2003, 4).

UNTAET therefore became one of the first UN peacebuilding missions to include a Gender Affairs Unit, with one also established as part of the UN’s mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, in 1999. UNTAET’s SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello explained his reasons for dropping the gender unit when he first announced plans for governance and administration of Timor-Leste in early 2000:
I was against the creation of a Gender Affairs Unit for [UNTAET] in East Timor. I did not think a gender unit would help rebuild institutions from the ashes of what the militia left (in Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 61).

While this statement highlights how gendered issues in post-conflict reconstruction are at the periphery of more traditional (liberal and military) peace and security perspectives, frequently leading to the marginalisation of women’s knowledge and experiences, de Mello later admitted that he was wrong. He stated that the Gender Affairs Unit had reached out to East Timorese women and had helped to bring to life human rights standards in Timor-Leste. As SRSG, de Mello became an important ally for the women’s movement in Timor-Leste during UNTAET, reiterated in both UNTAET accounts (see Whittington 2003) and within my research (Interview no. 24; Interview no. 26; Interview no. 27; Interview no. 28a). Following lobbying from East Timorese women and the establishment of the Gender Affairs Unit, it is said that de Mello had an “open-door policy” for East Timorese women’s organisations and was interested in and supportive of their objectives (Whittington 2003; Interview no. 27; Interview no. 28a). As described by the head of a national women’s NGO, “at that time, Sergio de Mello was very active…He supported the women’s movement 100 per cent at the time” (Interview no. 24).

Following the First National Women’s Congress, UNTAET’s gender unit took as its mandate the resulting Platform for Action, a move supported by de Mello who circulated the platform as a policy document to every department in the GPA (Roynestad 2003, 5; Interview no. 28a).

The head of UNTAET’s Gender Affairs Unit, Sherrill Whittington (2002, 4), explained the key objectives of the unit as:

To mainstream gender issues raised by East Timorese women, reflecting the ideas and priorities of women at the national level in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all UNTAET…activities. The United Nations focused on five core functions: capacity building and awareness raising; gender situational analysis and data collection; policy analysis, implementation and evaluation; rule of law and legislative analysis; networking and outreach.

Whittington was central in gaining some of the internal policy goals of gender mainstreaming within the UN mission, such as successfully establishing cultural and sensitivity training for incoming peacekeepers, which included elements of gender sensitivity (Interview no. 27; Interview no. 28a). These achievements were notable especially as they were at a time when the
incorporation of a gender perspective into peacebuilding was a nascent concept, and yet to be formalised under Resolution 1325.

UNTAET’s gender unit did however face a number of difficulties, reflective of the struggle that gender advocates at all levels can face. The delayed establishment and its limited budget meant that there were very little resources available to develop the gender unit: “[there was] no mandate, there was no structure, there was no staff” (Interview no. 28a). The initial dismissal of a gender unit and the pressure that had to occur for it to be reinstated is demonstrative of how easily gender was (and is) dismissed within UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. One participant described that at that time “there really wasn’t any commitment to the issue, other than tokenism” (Interview no. 28a), and another that there was no commitment to “overhauling the system”, instead just an understanding that “there’s this resolution [1325] so therefore we will have an office for women, and I think that’s pretty much it…back then, there was just the office for women” (Interview no. 27). As a ground breaker, UNTAET’s gender unit had expectations of it to justify the continuation of gender units and gender policy in future peace operations. Incorporating gender into peacebuilding was yet to become a mainstream policy approach and Resolution 1325 yet to be adopted. The Gender Affairs Unit had to ensure it demonstrated its relevance to an international audience:

I can tell you that had we not pulled off Timor…they [DPKO] were all but ready to get rid of this whole idea of having anything to do with gender and peacekeeping, and putting gender units or gender advisors [in UN missions] (Interview no. 28a).

With the beginning of UN peacebuilding, women’s activism in Timor-Leste continued but the focus shifted as they demanded a greater role in the post-occupation political landscape. Key platforms for East Timorese women’s activists after 1999 centred on gaining representation in politics, ensuring women’s rights in the newly developed constitution and in the future independent government, and drawing attention to issues of sexual violence (including that perpetrated by UN peacekeepers) and domestic violence. Although there was a large military peacekeeping component to UNTAET – and indeed even civilian posts were held by military staff (see Joshi 2005a, 2005b) – one of its central aims drawn from a vague mandate was to establish a stable democratic state with a representative government that could be presented to the international community as legitimate upon independence.
Much of the gender units activities then were centred on supporting East Timorese women in decision making roles and their participation in the political process. At the close of UNTAET, the GPA was transformed into the first independent government and the Gender Affairs Unit into the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), which was placed in the Prime Minister’s Office. The Gender Affairs Unit had aided in setting precedent for the shift into the OPE and members of the unit lobbied vocally to ensure such an office was established. The OPE was headed by a well-known East Timorese woman, former OPMT Secretary and a founding member of FOKUPERS, Maria ‘Micato’ Domingas Fernandes (Alves 2010, 79-87). The staff of the gender unit took on mentor and capacity building roles for the national OPE staff (Ospina 2006a, 37). Arguably the East Timorese government’s commitment to this was already set in the CNRT Resolution adopted in 2000. Nonetheless the Gender Affairs Unit certainly helped maintain their commitment to the creation of the OPE. In 2007 the OPE was dissolved and the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) was established in its place.

Three missions followed on from UNTAET, although none had such a broad mandate as the transitional administration. Despite the ongoing support for military strength, UNMISET’s gender unit was severely scaled back to one international staff advisor, mostly supporting the newly created OPE, coordinating an inter-agency collaboration on gender and promoting an understanding of CEDAW (Whittington 2002, 11-12). UNMISET mandated for gender focal points within different units of the mission (UNSC 2002). However, UNMISET placed less importance on gender, with many UN advisors less “gender aware” than during UNTAET and even “questioning the earlier gender-specific work of UNTAET” (Olsson 2009, 82). A review from DPKO confirms a lackadaisical approach to gender, finding that from June 2004 there was a six month period without a gender advisor that “was detrimental for the gender mainstreaming work” of UNMISET (Ospina 2006a, 11).

Following this six month hiatus, the new gender advisor found that gender awareness had to be renewed for most mission staff and undertook an intensive campaign to sensitise civilian and military staff (Ospina 2006a, 11). This included a training module on UN policy and procedures relating to claims of sexual exploitation and abuse (Ospina 2006a, 11). It is arguably telling that it was here that the refreshed gender unit focused its attentions, on the behaviour of its own personnel. Also during UNMISET, the second SRSRG, Sukehiro Hasegawa, established a commission to investigate reports of sexual misconduct by UN staff (Koyama & Myrttinen 2007). Under UNMISET, in 2002, an inter-agency UN Consultative Group on Gender was established, which brought together representatives from UNMISET’s Human Rights Office, Legal Office, Public Information, UNPOL, a number of UN agencies and the World Bank,
amongst others (Whittington 2002, 12). The aims of the Consultative Group on Gender were to ensure gender was mainstreamed throughout the UN’s activities in Timor-Leste, in the peacekeeping missions and in UN agencies, and to ensure this work was continued at the close of formal peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations (Whittington 2002, 12; Ospina 2006a, 33).

The single UNMISET gender advisor was obviously hard pressed to adequately address the various and complex issues raised by East Timorese women’s organisations during UNTAET and the precedent set by UNTAET’s Gender Affairs Unit. In 2005, UNMISET’s SRSG requested the gender advisor prioritise transferring gender mainstreaming work from the mission to the UN agencies in country as UNMISET began to wind down (Ospina 2006a, 33). Gender work conducted by the DPKO would thus continue in the country via the UN agencies that remained, such as UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women. This was part of the wind down of UNMISET and the handover to UNOTIL. A review conducted for DPKO found the handover from UNMISET to UNOTIL inadequate and that the position of the gender advisor was not contemplated in the planning or budget of UNOTIL (Ospina 2006a, 12). UNOTIL was a small political mission designed as a follow on to UNMISET. With no peacekeeping mandate, UNOTIL was defined institutionally as a peacebuilding exercise, coming under the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). As Resolution 1325 demands only the inclusion of a gender unit in peacekeeping operations or those missions with a peacekeeping assignment (DPKO missions) there was no gender unit in UNOTIL (Olsson 2009, 83).

In addition neither UNMISET nor UNOTIL gave significant support to the East Timorese women’s movement to sustain gains made during UNTAET (Olsson 2009, 82). As the focus shifted internally during UNMISET, to the mission structures and personnel behaviour, there was limited support given to either the OPE or women’s organisations directly from the gender unit (Ospina 2006a, 11). An UNMISET report from the time states that while the gender unit would “continue to monitor the progress on the promotion of a culture of equality in the country” the primary concerns lay with transferring knowledge and skills to ensure gender mainstreaming was continued once the DPKO mission came to an end (UNMISET Gender Affairs Office 2005). From this assessment it seems that as funds and interest waned with the winding down of each mission, gender work became more internally focused at the cost of external support for East Timorese women’s organisations.

Before the conclusion of UNOTIL, tensions within Timor-Leste’s security institutions turned into widespread violence on the streets of Dili between April and May of 2006. At the request
of Timor-Leste’s President and Prime Minister, the Security Council therefore authorised a renewed UN security presence in Timor-Leste and established UNMIT in 2006. Regaining a strong military and security sector focus, UNMIT included a gender unit, with UNMIT’s mandate reaffirming commitments to Resolution 1325 (UNSC 2006a). Gender focal points were placed in different units of UNMIT and under UNMIT a Gender Thematic Working Group was set up, a similarly collaborative effort to the inter-agency Consultative Group established under UNMISET. The gender unit’s focus during UNMIT remained on supporting women’s empowerment via enhancing their leadership and participation in politics. Being a police mission, UNMIT was also focused heavily on sensitising the national police force, PNTL (Polícia Nacional Timor-Leste) to issues of gender based violence and improving women’s representation and participation in PNTL.

Therefore, whereas UNTAET’s focus had largely centred on the women’s empowerment pillar of Resolution 1325, UNMIT focused more on the women’s protection mandate. UNMIT’s presence is associated with increased attention to sexual and gender based violence (Interview no. 12). In sensitising the PNTL to women’s security issues there was a heavy focus on sexual and gender based violence (institutionally given the acronym SGBV). As UNTAET was instrumental in getting a key women’s empowerment platform – establishing the OPE – UNMIT was heavily involved in establishing the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV) which was adopted in 2010.6 There had been much inter-agency and national NGO work going on around this issue for some time and an annual progress report from the UN notes that UNMIT in particular was integral to the adoption of the law (Gender Advisory Team 2010, 18-19).7

Other developments included the establishment of a Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) in 2001 to respond to cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and missing persons (UNFPA 2005). The VPU was established under UNTAET within Timor-Leste’s police force. In 2010, LADV stipulated the establishment of a specialised unit to investigate domestic violence cases and protect victims and, following the laws passing, the VPU served in this capacity (DPKO 2013, 18). The VPU’s establishment had been a response to the high number of sexual and gender based violence crimes reported. Sexual and gender based violence reportedly constitutes the most frequently reported crime to the police in Timor-Leste (APSC-TL 2009) and within

7 Where this legislation differed from previous legislation was that it made domestic violence a public crime in the country’s Criminal Code. This means that witnesses and police are obliged to carry out investigations and subsequently press charges of their own volition, regardless of the wishes of the victim.
sexual and gender based violence, domestic violence is the most commonly reported (APSC-TL 2009; NSD 2010; UNDP 2013). However, sexual and gender based violence is said to have come onto the UN’s agenda belatedly (near the close of UNTAET) and only through the activism of East Timorese women’s organisations in collaboration with the Gender Affairs Unit (Olsson 2009, 102; Joshi 2005a, 2005b).

The above analysis suggests that the way gender was incorporated into each mission in Timor-Leste was largely shaped by each mission’s willingness to resource and support a gender unit. Commitment to ensuring that gender is taken into consideration rests on this commitment being present at each level in the chain of command. A review into the impact of Resolution 1325 on mission compositions in 2010 found that while the responsibility to ensure gender was considered within the mission rested with senior staff members, the actual commitment to gender often varied or was entirely lacking (Peacekeeping Best Practices Section 2010, 38). Where such commitment from senior staff is lacking, the commitment of all staff is likely to follow suit. Responsibility also lies with DPKO headquarters. The DPKO did not have a gender advisor appointed at headquarters until 2004 (Purkarthofer 2006, 12). This means that for UNTAET and much of UNMISET, gender advisors had no official channel to communicate with or receive support directly from the DPKO in New York (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 66). Having a committed gender unit or adequately resourced gender advisors also appears integral to ensuring that women in the host country are consulted and that they are able to have a voice within the mission. As can be seen in UNMISET, under-staffed or under-resourced gender units led to women’s organisations being largely excised from the operations of the mission.

In addition, how gender was incorporated into each mission was consistent with the overall mission mandate. This in itself is not problematic. It can be assumed that a UN peacebuilding mission will prioritise its gender concerns in the areas in which it is already working. For example, as UNMIT was a police mission focused on retraining the national police force, the gender concerns largely centred on women’s participation in the police force and its responsiveness to gender security concerns. Yet mission priorities often rest on limited notions of traditional security; local context, perspectives, needs and interests are not taken into consideration of how the post-conflict site should be reconstructed. Funding and program design follow suit. In Timor-Leste, attention to women’s security concerns, such as sexual and domestic violence, was warranted, and women had been agitating around this issue for some time (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 334; Joshi 2005a, 2005b). As UN and donor interest increased around the issue however this was often at the expense of other, interrelated, gender concerns. For example, one international advisor explained that the work on women’s security
and empowerment in Timor-Leste had not adequately dealt with women’s economic empowerment and independence; she continued: “these areas are important but economic independence is vital to women’s equality and is also connected to women’s increased physical security. Focusing programs and funding on such select areas of gender equality ignores the relationship” (Interview no. 8). The sheer resources behind UN peacebuilding priorities in mission mandates can channel activities and resources away from other important areas.

**Conclusion**

A diverse group of women are working towards improved gender equality and improved rights for women in Timor-Leste and indeed many do so outside of what could be called the formal women’s movement and national women’s organisations. Given the role played by East Timorese women’s organisations and activists themselves in maintaining the UN’s earlier commitments to gender in peacebuilding, the contribution of East Timorese women themselves is essential to understanding the UN’s gender work in Timor-Leste. The support they garnered from successive missions wavered as funding and resources devoted to dedicated gender units reduced.

During the peacebuilding period, the establishment of the Gender Affairs Unit within UNTAET was an important milestone for East Timorese women and within the broader history of incorporating a gender perspective into UN peace operations. The office provided a clear point of contact between the women’s movement and UNTAET, one that was much utilised by East Timorese women. Successive UN missions following UNTAET also instituted gender units, bar UNOTIL, and precedent was established for future partnerships between mission gender units and women’s organisations in Dili. Yet, the chapter also established that complexities existed in the relationship between East Timorese women’s activists and the UN peacebuilding presence, and UN gender units themselves have faced significant challenges in maintaining mission wide commitments to gender issues. In addition, peacebuilding in Timor-Leste has been centralised, driven from the top-down, and mostly ignorant of existing governance frameworks in Timor-Leste and indigenous political arrangements. East Timorese women were arguably further marginalised in this regard, not just by ‘local’ political structures but importantly by UN ambivalence to gender and women. This ambivalence undermines the potential for women to be empowered by peacebuilding, which is examined further in the following chapter.
4: UN peacebuilding empowering women

This chapter examines one of the key focus areas of incorporating a gender perspective into post-conflict reconstruction: women’s empowerment. In Timor-Leste women’s empowerment, especially political empowerment, was heavily stressed from the beginning of UNTAET’s work and was conducted in tandem with sections of the East Timorese women’s movement. Whereas women’s protection came to be emphasised more heavily in later missions – to be discussed in the next chapter – women’s political empowerment was a stated goal from the outset of UN peacebuilding and remained central to the gender work of later missions. This chapter focuses on women’s political empowerment, as it has been a central and consistent feature of gender policy in UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, especially during the transitional administration with its aim of instituting independent governance. In UN peacebuilding, political empowerment centres on increasing women’s participation in governance and decision making. This chapter argues that empowerment is a selective process, in that only some well-placed women are able to capitalise on women’s increased representation in parliament, and in turn that this does not easily translate into broader substantive empowerment.

Moreover, the presence of the UN could undermine women’s empowerment and activism, an unintended consequence, through the preferences of working with depoliticised entities. This means that beyond the conceptualisation and implementation of policy to empower women in post-conflict settings, the UN’s own presence must be taken into consideration when understanding the post-conflict political landscape in which women were vying for their rights. The chapter argues the necessity of understanding empowerment in a broad sense to better encapsulate how UN peacebuilding interacts with women’s activism and their economic opportunities during peacebuilding. The case of Timor-Leste demonstrates that broader understandings of empowerment that include multiple dimensions – who is empowered, why, and to do what – are needed (Kabeer 2012). This analysis finds that the UN posits a specific vision of a depoliticised civil society that impacts on which forms of feminist activism are, firstly, supported and funded, and secondly influential on the UN’s activities. Moreover, the peacebuilding economy tends to support educated, English-speaking individuals. It is argued that while empowering women is a fundamental and necessary aspect of gender inclusive peacebuilding, peacebuilding praxis can actually disempower some forms of women’s collective activism as well as sideline non-elite women.
The empowerment mandate: women’s representation and participation

The empowerment of women underlies all international conventions aimed at reducing gender discrimination and improving equality between men and women. The *Beijing Platform for Action* (UN 1995), described in its mission statement as “an agenda for women’s empowerment”, affirms the importance of women’s empowerment. It does so in broad terms that speak to both physical and structural violence as well as discrimination. It commits to:

The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realising their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations (UN 1995, para 12).

The *Beijing Platform for Action* also cites the need to combat “inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels” as an essential part of women’s empowerment (UN 1995, para 44), linking women’s representation in decision making to women’s empowerment. In UN peacebuilding policy, empowerment frequently comes to rest on increasing women’s representation in decision making structures, an approach that aligns closely with the policy approach of ‘gender balance’, which essentially refers to balancing the numbers of men and women in governance and in peace processes. Improving women’s participation in peacebuilding is a fundamental element of the agenda contained within Resolution 1325 (Olsson & Gizelis 2013). Participation not only improves women’s representation in peacebuilding structures, such as within UN missions and at formal peace negotiations, but also women’s representation in post-conflict decision making and political frameworks, at local, national and international levels. Participation has then both internal and external goals: internal relates to the UN’s own goals for itself as an institution and as a standard bearer; external relates to the policies and programs the UN implements as part of its peacebuilding operations, and the attitudes and norms it seeks to replicate within peacebuilding contexts.

The inclusion of women in decision making has also been anchored to democratic processes, with this achievement recognised by the *Beijing Platform for Action* as necessary “in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning” (UN 1995, para 181). Women’s participation in decision making, and subsequently their empowerment, is therefore argued to be both a means and an end in instituting liberal democratic principles in peacebuilding, as
democratisation has become a cornerstone of the liberal peace paradigm. Resolution 1325 commits to women’s empowerment in UN peace operations and supports equal participation, not just as an innate right, but as a necessity for international peace and security. The resolution does not explicitly reference ‘empowerment’ but is consistent with the framing of empowerment in the *Beijing Platform for Action*. Empowerment, insofar as it relates to women’s access to and control over decision making, is emphasised in Resolution 1325 where it confirms:

> The important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and…the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regards to conflict prevention and resolution (UNSC 2000a).

Within the UN system itself, Resolution 1325 called on the Secretary General to appoint more female SRSGs and expand the role of women within the UN system. In order to further support women’s improved representation in peacebuilding, the UN itself aims to act as a role model by improving women’s representation within its own ranks. A DPKO policy directive on gender mainstreaming outlines a core principle of such work as ‘standard-setting’: “the staffing profile of DPKO and [UN] peacekeeping missions role model our institutional commitments to gender balance and equal participation of women in decision making” (DPKO 2006, 3). Similarly, a 2010 DPKO report also noted the broader role modelling function of the UN in empowering women in host states: “female peacekeepers act as role models in the local environment, inspiring women and girls in the often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights” (Gender Advisory Team 2010, 8). Improving women’s representation in peacekeeping missions, such as in police and military contingents, is therefore argued to impact positively the empowerment of women in the places these missions deploy. However, this is an area in which the UN often falls short and the rate of progress in integrating women into the UN’s workforce has been described as “glacial” (Weiss 2012, 119-23). Nonetheless, the internal and external dimensions of empowering women in international peacebuilding interventions are conceptualised as symbiotic and mutually supportive.

The empowerment of women in peacebuilding has an instrumentalist function in that improving women’s representation has been linked to the improved effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. Empowerment in turn then facilitates the reproduction of liberal governance propagated via peacebuilding interventions (Olsson & Gizelis 2013; Al-Ali & Pratt 2009b).
Similarly, in development literature, Naila Kabeer (1999) has noted that women’s empowerment has been linked to a host of potential policy outcomes, often relating to family welfare, intra-household equity and fertility decline. In short, women’s empowerment is frequently framed in a way that supports the overall liberal peacebuilding paradigm. Couching empowerment in instrumentalist terms does not though inherently limit the potential benefits of such policy (Kabeer 1999, 41-42). Women in developing or post-conflict countries have drawn on existent instrumentalist discourse to identify and advocate for their own needs and advocating in instrumentalist terms has been more successful (Kabeer 1999). This has also been the case in Timor-Leste, where advocates for women’s rights have consistently lobbied UN peacebuilding missions via gender units – and the East Timorese political elite – around issues they see as pertinent to women’s equal enjoyment of peace and security.

There are though contested understandings of empowerment, how it can be achieved, if it can be supported by external frameworks and whom such mechanisms actually empower. While women’s representation in decision making is necessary, the institutional approach to empowering women is narrow, particularly as not all women will benefit equally from measures that focus solely on representation. Krook and True (2012, 121) argue that as international gender norms have spread, their implementation has more readily empowered “technocrats” rather than the grassroots women envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and in Resolution 1325. They highlight a fundamental issue as being a disjuncture between women’s formal representation in the public arena and women’s substantive equality elsewhere, as well as the fact that the links between gender mainstreaming and the actual substantive empowerment of women are ambiguous. Moreover, Krook and True (2012) suggest that this disjuncture has left space for varied interpretations of empowerment; where the content of the norm is vague this enables their appropriation by many sources.

As well as often opaque processes of empowerment – meaning policies for women’s empowerment can be vague on how certain outcomes will enable women’s equality – Chris Corrin (2000) distinguishes between international support for women’s empowerment, and international ‘interference’ on the issue. Interference is defined as where officials make decisions on behalf of women but without any meaningful input from the women themselves, which Corrin (2000) analyses in the case of UNMIK in Kosovo. This is demonstrative of an approach that seeks to institute policy to empower women, yet ultimately takes decision making control away from them. It is therefore important to look not just at who is empowered, but also where decision making authority lies, especially regarding policy that is ostensibly intended to
empower women, or any group, in post-conflict reconstruction. The location of power and authority in peacebuilding is fundamental to any empowerment agenda.

**Empowerment in Timor-Leste**

In Timor-Leste, a key platform of both the Platform for Action produced at the First National Women’s Congress in 2000 and UNTAET’s Gender Affairs Unit was ensuring women had access to decision making roles in the formation of the new independent government. During UNTAET, the most prominent debates on women’s empowerment centred on whether a quota provision for equitable representation between men and women would be established as part of the new state formation. The quota would have ensured seats for women in the Constituent Assembly, which was to prepare a Constitution for an independent Timor-Leste, and which would become the National Parliament at independence in 2002.

When UNTAET was established it had a short time-frame in which to produce an independent government of Timor-Leste. After strident calls for a process of ‘Timorisation’, a National Consultative Council was set up. The Council comprised seven CNRT members, three from other national political parties, one representative of the Catholic Church, UNTAET SRSG Sergio de Mello and three other representatives from UNTAET, with the selection process undertaken by de Mello and CNRT members (Niner 2009, 215). The Consultative Council was established as a mechanism through which East Timorese could participate in the transitional administration of the country and was eventually transformed into the larger National Council (UNTAET 1999; Niner 2009, 215). Whereas the Consultative Council did not have the power to approve UNTAET laws, the National Council worked as an independent legislature, established committees and could challenge and amend legislation proposed by UNTAET (Ospina 2006b, 64). There were 34 members of the National Council, nominated by leaders of CNRT and civil society organisations, and included representatives from women’s organisations, youth organisations, political parties and district representatives. In establishing the National Council, SRSG Sergio de Mello made the decision that 30 per cent of the representatives would be women (Ospina 2006b, 65).

In 2001, the National Council was to provide UNTAET with recommendations for the election of a Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly’s primary aim was to prepare a Constitution for an independent democratic Timor-Leste and was to be elected according to UNTAET regulation (UNTAET 2001a). What was not included in this regulation, as had previously with the establishment of the National Council, was a provision for a 33 per cent quota for women’s representation in the Constituent Assembly (Aucoin & Brandt 2010). The
quota issue had proved to be a source of heated debate in the month’s prior. The debate around quotas highlights how UN peacebuilding both empowers and disempowers women as the UN presence heavily influenced the quota debate, and the eventual failure of the quota provision. At the same time, activists within UNTAET’s gender unit and UN agencies were advocating in support of the quota provision with East Timorese women’s groups.

East Timorese women’s activists and UNTAET’s gender unit both felt that for any ongoing gains to be made in terms of women’s political inclusion in Timor-Leste, both women’s representation and the foundations for a gender-sensitive government needed to be provided from the outset of the peacebuilding phase. A provision for a minimum 33 per cent quota in all sectors, including the UN’s transitional government, was contained in the Platform for Action of the first National Women’s Congress in 2001. East Timorese women’s organisations, UNTAET’s gender unit and UNIFEM (now UN Women) were all in favour, but were vociferously challenged by both the UN and East Timorese (mostly male) politically elite. This was perhaps best described by one former UN advisor:

That was one of the objectives of the women’s platform that they would have a minimum of 33 per cent in any decision making, office of government...And the way they wanted that was by affirmative action measures, there would be quotas, there would actually be reserve seats for women. So that became a proverbial firestorm (Interview no. 28a).

A quota provision is not a surprising demand given the precedent established by CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action for affirmative action measures in increasing women’s representation in decision making. CEDAW demands women’s equal right to hold public office and to participate in government. Article 4 of CEDAW pertains specifically to ‘special measures’ and states that “temporary special measures” are acceptable to “accelerate de facto equality between women and men and shall not be considered discrimination.” The Beijing Platform for Action likewise calls for a 30 per cent quota to ensure women’s representation in UN decision making (Carey, H. 2001, 51).¹ UNTAET, as a UN authorised body, had obligations to both CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. Although neither of these conventions was explicitly referenced in UNTAET’s establishing mandate (UNSC 1999c), the

¹A 30 per cent target had initially been set by ECOSOC to be achieved by 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action reiterates this target, as by 1995 it had not been achieved. The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985) and General Assembly Resolutions throughout the 1980s and 1990s also established targets of 30 and 35 per cent, within the secretariat and throughout all arms of the UN system.
first regulation of UNTAET stated that all persons undertaking public duties or holding public office in Timor-Leste should observe the standards held in CEDAW (UNTAET 1999).

Reportedly, the East Timorese women’s movement felt unsupported in their endeavour to achieve a national quota system, both from the national political elite and UNTAET. In particular there was reluctance on the part of the UN’s Political Affairs Office, in Timor-Leste and at UN headquarters in New York (Cristalis & Scott 2005). The director of political affairs for UNTAET was opposed and actively lobbied against the quota provision (Aucoin & Brandt 2010, 256). Ultimately, whether or not to formalise a quota provision was a decision to be made by the National Council, which, as discussed above, was made up of UNTAET staff and East Timorese alike, with power remaining centralised in Sergio de Mello’s hands as SRSG. However, the Electoral Affairs Division in New York was firm in its opposition, threatening to withdraw from Timor-Leste and not supervise the upcoming elections if the quota system went ahead (Interview no. 28a; also see Pires 2004).

Milena Pires (2004) argues that while East Timorese women’s attention was focused on lobbying internationally, such as to UN political and electoral affairs departments in New York, UNTAET personnel in Dili opposed to the quota provision were lobbying East Timorese National Council members. UNTAET officials opposed to a quota system were well placed to make their feelings known and lobby for a decision by the National Council to be consistent with the wishes of the UN’s Department of Political Affairs in New York. UNTAET’s Political Affairs Office stated that establishing a quota system “would undermine the legitimacy of the electoral result”, would be a “violation of the principle of self-determination” and that “on the basis of international experience be unlikely to elect women of true political influence” (in Morrow & White 2002, 39). Advice given from the Department of Political Affairs in New York to the Political Affairs Office in UNTAET stated that:

UNTAET has exclusive responsibility for holding free and fair elections in East Timor…while some countries do have quotas for women (and for other groups) other democratic countries vehemently oppose the practise. This would include some members of the Security Council…Electoral quotas for women (or any other group) do not constitute international best practice for elections (in Pires 2004, 7).

This advice from the Political Affairs Division in New York, given to the Political Affairs Office in UNTAET, would appear inconsistent with the best practice enshrined within CEDAW.
and the *Beijing Platform for Action*. It also indicates how UNTAET shaped the meaning of women’s empowerment and equality – equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome (see Krook, Lovenduski & Squires 2009) – and how that empowerment and equality was to be achieved. Article 4 of CEDAW explicitly states that the objective of affirmative action measures is for them to sit in place until equality of opportunity and treatment is achieved. Prior to that occurrence, *inequality* in opportunity – affirmative action measures – can facilitate, at the least, equality of outcome. Essentially, as UNTAET staff lobbied against the quota provision to local elites, deliberately diminishing the possibility of its institution, UNTAET was undermining existing international gender norms which are supposed to support the empowerment of women.

By involving itself in the quota debates – and with well-placed individuals using their positions to do so – UNTAET was shaping definitions of equality generally and the nature of women’s equality specifically in Timor-Leste. UNTAET was defining a correct way for women to become empowered or to legitimately participate in national political institutions. This observation reflects broader criticisms of the liberal peace project by those who argue that it seeks to create a particular mode of governance regardless of whether it is consistent with the desire of indigenous populations in post-conflict states or, indeed, in the interests of equality (Jabri 2013). The director of one national women’s NGO reflected on her memory of the quota debate:

I remember at the time…the women’s pressure group they [had] demands for women in political positions. And they strongly argued and [UNTAET] said no. Even in front of us they are arguing with us, they said ‘you have to compete [in the election without special measures]’. [We said] ‘Ok we can compete with you’…So, we have to compete, that’s the way. There was a women’s pressure group to ask for these demands and our rights, and also through [SRSG] Sergio de Mello. We had to demonstrate that we were capable… [We said] ‘If you want to compete we can compete, why not? But you have to give us the opportunity’. This is the way that we fight to get these rights (Interview no. 26).

For the quota provision to be allowed it would have had to have passed through the National Council which was providing recommendations for the establishment of the Constituent Assembly. This is where it eventually failed, although with no small help from the UN’s Political Affairs Department and UNTAET’s Political Affairs Office. Despite the eventual failure of the quota demands, UNTAET’s gender unit, in partnership with Rede Feto and
UNIFEM (now UN Women), worked to support female candidates and place women in leadership positions. The support provided included training workshops with members of parliament from the Asia Pacific region who shared their experiences and political strategies with the East Timorese participants (Brandt 2001, para 26). SRSG Sergio de Mello continued to support women’s representation through other ad hoc measures. Consistent with his ‘Strategy for the Equality of Women’, de Mello offered more TV and radio airtime to:

Women candidates of those parties with a higher number of women running in the elections…Political parties with at least 30 per cent women candidates contesting in winnable positions, and all female independent candidates received twice the airtime of those who did not meet the criteria (Jones, Wood & Wachtmeister 2001).

An outcome of the training workshops was the establishment of a Women’s Caucus, which was to provide support to women throughout the campaigning period and assistance to those who were elected to the Constituent Assembly (Brandt 2001, para 26). The Women’s Caucus continues to be a mechanism of cross party support to women parliamentarians (Costa, Sawer & Sharp 2013) and has continued to work with the gender units of subsequent missions. UNMIT’s gender unit worked with the parliamentary Women’s Caucus again in the lead up to the 2007 elections and continued to work with both the Women’s Caucus and the Government of Timor-Leste to ensure women’s representation in parliament (Gender Advisory Team 2010). Prior to the 2007 election, UNMIT’s gender unit provided workshops to women candidates in public speaking and election campaigning. Then, again before the 2012 elections, UNMIT in collaboration with the Government of Timor-Leste and UN agencies held a conference on ‘Enhancing Women’s Leadership and Participation in the 2012 Elections’, a key objective of which was to draft a Road Map and a Strategic Framework that would form the basis of implementation of the conference objectives (UNSC 2012a).

Despite the debate around quotas, women’s representation in parliament in Timor-Leste has remained consistently high. In the 2001 Constituent Assembly elections women gained 27 per cent representation, one of the highest in the Asia Pacific region (Ospina 2006a, 10). In the 2007 election women’s representation rose to 27.7 per cent and in 2012 it rose again to 30.1 per cent (EU EOM 2012, 22). This achievement has been bolstered by the adoption of a party list system in 2006 which stipulated that each party list must contain at least one woman per every group of
four candidates, amended in 2011 to one in every three. This quota system has not however
greatly increased women’s representation, which, as noted above, was still relatively high after
the 2001 Constituent Assembly elections. In addition, reserved positions for women were
introduced at the village (suco) level in 2009. The Women’s Caucus, established to support
female parliamentarians across party lines, has continued to work to ameliorate party divisions
that hinder policies that would benefit women in Timor-Leste. The members of the Women’s
Caucus are a diverse group, with representatives from all major political parties (Costa, Sawer
& Sharp 2013, 336-37). The caucus draws on both the East Timorese constitution and
international frameworks, such as CEDAW, for legitimacy (Costa, Sawer & Sharp 2013, 337).

Also of note here is the lack of women’s political involvement at the village level. In Timor-
Leste, while UNTAET was shaping the national political landscape, as discussed above, there
were also attempts to restructure and democratise local and village level politics. At this level
quotas for women’s representation were implemented with no resistance from the UN’s
Department of Political Affairs. From 2000—2003 the World Bank Community Empowerment
Project (CEP) headed by UNTAET functioned in Timor-Leste. This was an attempt at
decentralisation and to promote effective village and sub-district level participation in
development activities (UNTAET 2000a). The CEP established village councils and sub-district
councils – divorced from existing indigenous structures and excluding traditional leaders – to
work under UNTAET and UNTAET-appointed district administrators (Hohe 2004).

The CEP subsequently came under intense criticism for being an ill-planned attempt to
decentralise development at the village level and as a poor attempt at shaping Timor-Leste’s
economy on the part of the World Bank (Moxham 2005). The CEP implementation and
outcomes captures the near total failure of UNTAET and subsequent missions to institute
relevance in national political structures at the village level and is a reflection of the centralised
way in which the UN missions operated in Timor-Leste. In particular the CEP program has been
criticised for failing to recognise existing indigenous political formations in Timor-Leste’s
different districts and villages and for failing to connect village and district governance with
national politics (Pushkina & Maier 2012; Chopra 2000).

CEP guidelines required women’s election to positions in village councils (Cummins 2011).
Therefore, while UNTAET was deriding quotas at the national level, they were instituting them
in village councils in partnership with the World Bank. While women did take up these seats the

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2 In addition, candidates must be substituted with a candidate of the same gender in case of vacancy. See
Law/RDTL-Laws/Law-2006-06.pdf
quality of their engagement and their ability to do so remained challenged at the village level, denoting patriarchal notions of political decision making power (Ospina & Hohe 2001; Cummins 2011). Moreover, Deborah Cummins (2011) maintains that there is an assumption that local politics are more accessible for women even though this is not borne out in reality. Anecdotal evidence from participant interviews further confirms this, with one participant stating that the population was more amenable to women in leadership roles at the national level, a more abstract realm, rather than “closer to home” (Interview no. 13). Thus, UN peacebuilding maintained centralised power in Timor-Leste and undermined women’s access to this centralised domain. At the same time women’s representation was instituted at the village level, a level that was disenfranchised from national political decision making and an area that remains stratified by patriarchal relations.

International intervention in Timor-Leste shaped what was seen as acceptable representations of women’s empowerment. Some argued against affirmative action provisions as they saw it as inconsistent with the democratic principles that should be enshrined in the state they were building. It was also the national political domain, not the local or village level, which would be presented to the international community to judge the UN’s peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste. It is arguable that for this reason the quota debate played out in the national political realm as opposed to the village level, where institutionalising women’s seats in village councils implemented by UNTAET and the World Bank in partnership was met with no resistance by UN personnel (Cummins 2011).

As UNTAET was one of the first missions to include a gender unit it is frequently “hailed as an example of peacebuilding that took women seriously” (Charlesworth 2008, 354). For example in 2006, a review of UNTAET and UNMISET staff found that within those missions “[a] widely acknowledged sustained achievement of UNTAET/UNMISET [was] the greatly increased role of women in politics” (Ospina 2006a, 49). As the above analysis highlights however, UNTAET was not wholly supportive of the affirmative action measures which East Timorese women were lobbying for in 2001 in order to ensure such high representation. In the quota debate, the UN’s goal to present a new liberal democratic nation to the world in 2002 took precedent over the Women’s Congress goal to implement a quota for women’s seats in parliament. Although such measures are consistent with democratic principles, as stated in CEDAW, the predominant view of the UN in New York and the Political Affairs Office in Dili was that those members of the Security Council that were oppose to a quota provision should be placated over and above the desires of the East Timorese women’s movement. Conversely, women’s representation was instituted at the village level, with no consideration of indigenous
power structures, which did little to actually empower women to act, both at village and at national levels.

Yet women’s groups advocating for quotas also received much support from UNTAET’s gender unit. Therefore it is not simply that the UN’s presence either supported or inhibited women’s activism in post-occupation Timor-Leste. Rather, UNTAET shaped the political landscape, engaged with Timor-Leste’s political elite and, in this case, posed an obstacle to a particular goal of women’s groups, one that was viewed as inconsistent with the liberal democratic ideals to be imparted as part of the state-building goals of transitional administration. This further highlights how peacebuilding and UN engagement can both empower and disempower women. While the UN has been at the forefront of defining international gender norms and setting precedent for a goal such as quotas, the more immediate presence of UNTAET in Timor-Leste proved an overwhelming obstacle to its establishment.

**Empowerment for whom?**

In essence, peacebuilding in Timor-Leste centralised political decision making power in Timor-Leste, an area that some members of UNTAET actively sought to limit women’s access to. Conversely, women’s representation was instituted at the village level in poorly planned village councils that were not well connected to the national political realm. This has important implications for understanding empowerment in post-occupation Timor-Leste. This section looks particularly at the stratification of peacebuilding dividends, delineated as they were along existing class and spatial differences. As discussed in the previous chapter, the economic benefits of UNTAET and UNMISET were centralised in the capital Dili, and even then more likely to benefit those who already had some wealth and/or education (Carnahan, Gilmore & Rahman 2005, iii; Moxham & Caparic 2013, 3124); a situation that was reflected anecdotally in interviews (Interview no. 4; Interview no. 5; Interview no. 7; Interview no. 11; Interview no. 14; Interview no. 15; Group interview no. 2).³ The lack of job creation and high unemployment rates were consistent criticisms of successive UN missions in Timor-Leste. It follows that not all individuals were equally empowered by the UN’s presence in Timor-Leste, and that conversely there could be disempowering effects (Moxham & Caparic 2013; Charlesworth 2008). Moreover, given the disconnections between national and local political realms, it is questionable how empowered national (women) parliamentarians are to act on behalf of all women and to respond to women’s issues (Smith 2015).

³ The national government’s own development plans have done little to alleviate these divisions and “from the perspective of the rural communities…the centralisation of government planning and implementation of programs has left the rural areas devoid of opportunity” (Wigglesworth 2010b, 150).
Even though women’s representation in parliament has been consistently achieved this is not the entirety of understanding women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste. Representation in parliament can be a narrow measure of women’s empowerment, one that does not completely capture the nature of women’s substantive equality. Using measures such as women’s representation in parliament represents only a limited cohort of women. This includes empowerment gained through affirmative action measures which tend to benefit only a few and is not necessarily transferable to the broader community (Pupavac 2005). There is arguably little information on the relationship between gender balance (representation) and gender mainstreaming, and then in turn women’s substantive equality (Oudraat 2013). There appears to be an assumption that “women’s inequality is removed once women participate equally in decision-making fora” (Charlesworth & Chinkin cited in Swaine 2009, 421). Blurred lines between gender mainstreaming and gender balance leads to an overreliance on the approach of ‘just add women and stir’, which fails to deal with underlying structural inequalities and power imbalances that continue to subordinate women (Swaine 2009). What was not well recognised by international peacebuilders in Timor-Leste was that the needs and interests of different women will vary from location to location and will differ based on religion, class, sexuality and so forth (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 345).

In Timor-Leste there is a disjuncture between the discourse of equality and participation, which was part and parcel of peacebuilding rhetoric, and the “actual lived experience of women in Timor-Leste” (Interview no. 7). This relates to translating theoretical concepts, international documents, norms and rhetoric into more concrete policy and practice, and subsequently outcomes. This is in the context of a developing country in which many people, not simply women, remain in poor living conditions and lack access to education and health care. In terms of women’s empowerment specifically then it is unsurprising the benefits of this work have also remained centralised in the capital and centrally identified agendas have been found to be at odds with the diversity of issues and priorities of East Timorese women in different socio-economic and spatial settings (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 345). Moreover, identifying priorities centrally contrasted with the structure of women’s organising during occupation, where OMT had a “matrix management” of tiered levels, meaning each section could operate independently based on local priorities (de Fatima 2002).

By paying attention to women’s diverse experiences of and contributions to conflict and war, it becomes apparent that women and men are both empowered and disempowered by conflict (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001; Charlesworth 2008) and, as argued throughout this thesis, the same is true of peacebuilding (also see Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012). Certainly some women
successfully utilised the platform provided by the international presence to vociferously argue for their rights in post-occupation Timor-Leste. Indeed, East Timorese women’s activism was fundamental to maintaining UN attention to gender issues, as discussed in the previous chapter. However the empowerment mandate was unable to provide equal benefits for all and benefits have been stratified along existing rural-urban divisions and socio-economic divisions. As one participant explained: “I can say women in this country enjoy their political rights, but that’s just mostly at a national level, not in the rural area” (Interview no. 3). Some participants also noted that women’s political representation did not mean that all women in Timor-Leste were equally empowered to engage as an individual in national politics. The director of one national women’s organisation stated:

Yeah, and I think for the women’s participation in politics, I can say we are better than other developed countries, because now we have more like 32-33 per cent [women] in parliament. For me decision making is not about something that we can make at the higher [national] level. But how can women make decisions for themselves. [For example:] How many children do they want to have? Who they decide to marry or not, to have children or not, deciding to go to health facilities, legal facilities…Even, you know like in the political parties, what political parties women want to vote [for] based on what they think and what they want, what is good for them and good for the children and good for the nation. Not to have someone say, “Because I’m party A, you have to vote for my party, because you married me, you are married to my party!” That’s not the way (Interview no. 3).

The above statement notes that even though formal equality may legally exist in Timor-Leste there are restrictions to women’s full enjoyment of their rights. Donna Pankhurst (2008a, 14) has noted that:

Even where the political and legal apparatus is in place to allow women to take part in political life, their level of political participation tends to remain lower than men’s…Practical or cultural constraints, or family and community pressure, can bar women from exercising their right to vote, or to stand for elections.

Moreover, as one participant, a representative from UNMIT, stated: “Women in Timor-Leste will vote for who they are told to [vote]…they are not viewed as independently politically active
and parties feel no need to appeal to them or win their votes” (Interview no. 13). The above quoted participant went on to cite a law that disproportionately undermined women’s political rights due to the intersection with gender roles:

For example, one of the laws [that was implemented was that] everyone had to go back to their original [home] place to vote. This affected women’s participation because some women are pregnant, or with babies and the transportation that [is available] everyone have to compete to get into the car…[Or women are] with children, or in the hospitals as well, with sick people [relatives] (Interview no. 3).

In short, representation in the national political realm has not, on its own, fundamentally led to women’s broader enjoyment of political rights as a collective and as individuals. East Timorese women’s activists have struggled to translate formal gains of representation into the equal enjoyment of political, economic and social equality among women in diverse socio-economic, political and geographic settings across Timor-Leste. The centralised nature of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, including work around gender equality, has further cemented a perception that this work benefits only a select group of well-placed women and men in the capital that has not equated to political equality at a local level. As one NGO advisor explained:

A lot of people complain that all of the focus on gender empowerment is in Dili, and for the elite, and for Lucia Lobato⁴ and of course they can be in the parliament, but it doesn’t mean that me and my village, that I have any voice (Interview no. 6).

This is consistent with Vanessa Pupavac’s (2005) findings in Bosnia, who argued that international gender empowerment programs may have empowered a small number of urban elite women and legitimised international governance in the area, but ultimately gave little prospects for empowerment outside of this realm. As the consistent gains of women’s representation in Timor-Leste would suggest, there are a number of powerful elite women in Timor-Leste, who arguably have more power invested in them than “non-dominant men” (Niner 2013, 245). The urban centre is where the most change in regards to women’s empowerment is visible, as one participant stated “all changes have been in Dili [in regards to women’s increased empowerment]” (Group interview no. 2). The director of one women’s NGO, when discussing empowerment mechanisms introduced via UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, stated “I think

⁴ Former Justice Minister currently in jail for corruption.
that it works so slowly in Timor-Leste, so it’s just in Dili and some areas, but in the rural area I think it has had a minimum impact, or maybe it takes time” (Interview no. 18). These statements again stress the need to look more closely at who is empowered, and how, by peacebuilding policy outcomes.

**Empowering women, but not their activism?**

When talking about the UN’s engagement with national women’s organisations in Timor-Leste, it is important to note this broader context. It highlights that East Timorese women’s engagement with UN peacebuilding cannot be simply characterised by gender, but can also be understood through critical security perspectives that see top-heavy peacebuilding projects as marginalising of a host state’s indigenous social and political structures, thus seeking to reproduce a particular model of state governance seen as most relevant to the international community (MacGinty 2008; Chopra 2000; Gorjão 2002; Jabri 2013). This section therefore analyses women’s organisations and women’s collective activism during UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, noting to what extent individual women and women as a collective were both empowered and disempowered during the peacebuilding phase. Rather than being a speculation on the intentions of policymakers, the analysis instead aims to show how peacebuilding policy could function to both undermine and support women’s organising.

In post-occupation Timor-Leste, national (Dili-based) women’s organisations have spearheaded the relationship between UN peacebuilding and women’s activism in Timor-Leste. During the occupation period, East Timorese women’s organisations had been an important part of international advocacy for Timor-Leste’s independence. East Timorese women’s activists also campaigned for women’s human rights in Timor-Leste, with the twin goals intertwined: the liberation of East Timorese women was connected to the liberation of Timor-Leste from occupation (see chapter three). Consequently when UN peacebuilding was launched in Timor-Leste in 1999 there was an existing broad based women’s movement that had advocated collectively for both Timor-Leste’s independence and women’s human rights (Smith 2014).

Connections to transnational advocacy networks were facilitated by East Timorese women who had studied abroad and then returned to Timor-Leste, bringing feminist ideas with them. In the post-occupation period though, this became a source of tension, compounded by the context of a large foreign presence managing competing interests for political power. Those East Timorese who returned with better education and language skills in Portuguese and English were favoured in terms of funding, jobs and political positions. Both within and outside the women’s movement there have been claims that UNTAET favoured the returning diaspora in fostering a
ruling elite, especially due to their education and language skills (Federer 2005). For example, one participant explained that as with job creation more generally, increased job opportunities for women specifically occurred predominantly in Dili (Interview no. 7). Whether or not individuals had been diaspora activists or not, being able to speak English was certainly a privilege in the job market created by the UN; as the director of one women’s NGO stated:

One thing that is a concern, is the technical process, especially the people who can speak English or can access to learn English…Sometimes the UN just provide this training for them to go overseas to learn about gender in English, but when they come back they don’t want to go into the field to work with other women…Sometimes, especially in the recruitment, some women did not have the opportunity to work with the UN because of the language barrier. So some women actually had very good experience in gender issues and gender mainstreaming, but because they did not know English everything is just closed to them. And there were some people who know English but have less experience in gender, so the job will go to them (Interview no. 18).

This statement further reflects that not only were peacebuilding dividends centralised but that these benefits tended to run along existing stratifications. The same appears true for women’s empowerment. For example, the women’s network Rede Feto nominated three women for the National Council to be established by UNTAET, all of who had been in Timor-Leste throughout occupation and were active in their communities. UNTAET however ignored these nominations and instead selected Milena Pires who had returned to Timor-Leste after being exiled and spoke both Portuguese and English. This created controversy as ‘insiders’ disliked the appointment of a former exile who did not represent any women’s organisation in Timor-Leste (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 76; Marshall 2001). Another participant further explained that large numbers of illiterate women had participated in the resistance struggle and had been active members of OPMT, yet were excluded from working with UNTAET which mostly employed or consulted those women who were educated, literate and with some English language skills (Interview no. 17).

This statement and the quote above is consistent with Marianne Marchand’s (2009, 925) claim that gender mainstreaming can marginalise available gender expertise on the ground via neo-imperialist tendencies which seek to fuse local activism with the interveners’ policy approach. This represents an ‘integrationist’ approach, where ‘gender’ or women are added, rather than a transformative approach where peacebuilding and development principles are transformed in
consideration of gender (Taylor 2007). Standard UN job requirements, such as the ability to
speak the same language as your employer, were out of reach for many people in post-
occupation Timor-Leste. As well as requirements to understand English, it was also necessary to
be literate. Large numbers of East Timorese men and women were illiterate when UNTAET
was established in 1999, shutting them out of what was the biggest economy at the time:
peacebuilding. This also meant that swathes of knowledge from those who had lived and
experienced colonisation, occupation, and resistance were shut out from the UN.

In addition to unequal distribution of benefits, peacebuilding in Timor-Leste has impacted
women’s collective activism. In terms of empowerment, some women’s organisations have
received more funding and training when compared to others. There were many points where
national organisations felt empowered by the UN presence, such as in being able to access
training and funding, and in having an additional partner in lobbying the national political elite.
In its work with East Timorese women’s organisations, UNTAET’s gender unit could and did
provide an important avenue for East Timorese women to access both UNTAET leadership and
East Timorese political leaders. As one participant explained, for the East Timorese women’s
movement, during the transitional period the UN was a “bridge” to their government (Interview
no. 26). Knowing that UNTAET held authority for only a transitional timeframe meant East
Timorese women’s organisations and activists had to utilise this avenue to make gains that
could then be cemented in the future independent East Timorese government. The head of one
national women’s organisation explained the avenue provided by UNTAET in lobbying both
the UN and the East Timorese government:

Because this is a transitional government [UNTAET], this is the way that you
can work with them and demand them to influence our political leaders…to
convince UNTAET to influence the new government and show, yeah we have
capacity and our leaders, they are aware about our contributions and our
political engagement…They are aware, they are very conscious about the
involvement of women [and their] contribution to liberation. So this is a kind
of bridge to influence our own government...And we keep going with these
steps (Interview no. 26).

Conversely though there were points where women’s organising was challenged by the heavy
international presence of the UN (Smith 2015). At times the UN presence had a disempowering
impact on women’s collective activism; for example, by being shut out of high-level peace
negotiations or women’s organisations not being treated as an equal resource of knowledge and
expertise. This case can be framed by the broader political post-occupation context in which the UN transitional administration was operating from a ‘blank state’ approach. In Timor-Leste, resistance era organisations like OPMT have been less well integrated into UN peacebuilding then other women’s organisations considered non- or apolitical, such as Rede Feto. FRETILIN was sidelined in the post-occupation period in favour of UN association with key political figures such as Xanana Gusmão. As the women’s wing of FRETILIN, OPMT was also caught up in this (Niner 2009, 215; Rees 2003). The context of an exclusionary, blank state approach and the sidelining of political allies besides Xanana Gusmão, Jose Ramos Horta and the CNRT framed engagement with the East Timorese women’s movement as well. As the women’s wing of FRETILIN, OPMT was as affected by the sidelining of FRETILIN leaders and was not divorced from this political landscape. One participant who had worked in UNTAET explained that:

…if the political situation, the political landscape changes, that impacts on them [women’s wings of political parties] as well. They’re not independent of that and what those effects are. And with the decline in the control that FRETILIN had, I think that’s also, you want to look at how that impacted on OPMT (Interview no. 28b).

This reflects what others have noted, that donors will tend to fund non-political middle class organisations “whose interests match their own” (Belloni 2008, 204). Maria de Fatima, Responsável Geral of firstly OPMT then OMT from 1998, explained to a conference in Adelaide the reluctance of international actors to draw on existing (politicised) resource networks in Timor-Leste:

Unfortunately this highly effective grassroots structure [of OMT] does not appear to meet the expectations and requirements of donor agencies, which have often focused on more conventional organisational structures (generally NGOs) specifically formed to accommodate donor funding, or the World Bank managed [programs]5 which has focused on building new local government structures superceding [sic] indigenous political structures, clandestine and other social structures. OMT is marginalised from many of the economic and social initiatives taking place as a result. This has not stopped OMT from continuing its programs unaided, looking after the many widows and orphans

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5 This is a reference to the World Bank-UNTAET CEP, discussed previously.
left behind after the destruction, initiating education, health, economic and food programs, and providing shelter for the homeless (de Fatima 2002).  

In a 2000 Security Council special session on the role of women in international peace and security, which introduced Resolution 1325, a statement was given from Rede Feto which spoke of East Timorese women’s role and experience in conflict, as well as their continued activism post-occupation. The statement noted the context of having the UN as transitional administrator post-occupation and that its presence could compound existing discriminatory attitudes towards women:

It has become apparent that even with the UN’s presence in East Timor, the women of East Timor still have a double battle to fight. We must combat our own society’s views of the role of women…while at the same time continuously advocating to the UNTAET and the East Timor Transitional Administration (ETTA) for policies and hiring practices that include women (Rede Feto 2000a).

This statement is reminiscent of the “double battle” faced by East Timorese women – of traditional culture and colonial society – referred to by Rosa Bonaparte (1976) at the establishment of OPMT. In this regard, Bonaparte noted both local discriminatory attitudes and the discrimination women faced during colonialism, as women and as East Timorese.

UNTAET’s gender unit established a good working relationship with Rede Feto. Taking on the Platform for Action from the first National Women’s Congress as their mandate, the Gender Affairs Unit worked to facilitate and support some objectives identified by women’s organisations and presented to the UN via Rede Feto. Hilary Charlesworth and Mary Wood (2002, 343) have argued that Rede Feto, as the main interlocutor with the Gender Affairs Unit, was not representative of the broad base of the women’s movement and was instead established “for the purpose of communicating priorities and approaches between…advocates from the NGOs represented and the six UN officials working in the [gender unit].” A former UN staff member explained the UN and donor preference in working with a secretariat when compared to a politicised or revolutionary organisation like OPMT:

Although de Fatima explicitly references international NGOs, the perspective is certainly relevant to relationships between local organisations and the UN missions and gels with other interview data and anecdotal evidence. Donor agencies would also encapsulate UN agencies.
That’s another consideration, is that when you do try to set up what they call these umbrella networks of women’s organisations, which [the UN] very much encourage because fragmentation occurs immediately in that post-conflict transition period, a fragmentation that unfortunately is largely donor driven as well. Where there’s so much funding being earmarked for emergency funding etcetera, you know that they want to get it out the front door as quickly as possible and they tend to actually approach organisations, particularly women’s organisations, to channel their funding through them. [And so they suggested] approaching the donors as a coordinated unit. Because the donors didn’t want to, in many ways they didn’t want to deal with this one, that one, another one with their little projects and their little proposals. And I just don’t know what happened with OPMT whether it sort of went off on its own path, or…There could have been sensitivity about giving them money directly because of their political affiliations (Interview no. 28b).

NGO formation is a key aspect of post-conflict peacebuilding. In the liberal peace paradigm, a well-functioning civil society is argued to be fundamental to instituting liberal democratic peace in post-conflict states (UNGA 2004; Belloni 2008; Richmond 2009a). According to one activist, NGO formation was a key way to be able to engage with UN peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste, yet in order to engage NGOs could not be politically aligned (Interview no. 17). Those who were illiterate, could not speak English, and had limited resources were further marginalised in this regard. Research conducted by others during UNTAET found similarly, with a preference on the part of UNTAET and its Gender Affairs Unit to work with and via Rede Feto and discouraging discussion with other women’s NGOs (Charlesworth & Wood 2002). However, there was mistrust of Rede Feto from the other cohorts given its “recent vintage” at the time and it was viewed as a weak entity compared to other organisations like Fokupers, OPMT and OMT who had large bases with direct membership and relevant local knowledge (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 343).

This statement reflects claims that gender mainstreaming in post-conflict contexts can depoliticise women’s movements (El-Kassem 2008; Taylor in Swaine 2009, 422). The presence of the Gender Affairs Unit was important for women’s organisations and activists to be able to gain traction within the mission and thus within the national political mechanisms. However engagement with gender units and UN peacebuilding activities as a whole has also meant that women’s activism has had to conform to a particular regime, arguably empowering only those who do so.
NGOs become the primary mechanism through which women’s activists can engage with international institutions like the UN, meaning activism is channelled into NGO structures. This is what some term the “NGO-isation” of national women’s movements, essentially a depoliticising process. Nazneen and Sultan (2009, 193) describe the process of NGO-isation as one where “issues of collective concerns are transformed into isolated projects without consideration for the economic, social and political context within which these issues arise.” A more radical definition also exists whereby women’s movements, often post-liberation, are depoliticised and fragmented in the process of forming civil society organisations in order to undertake an implementing role for international interveners. Parallels could certainly be drawn here with the case of Timor-Leste, as national women’s organisations did become the primary mechanism of implementation and socialisation of international gender norms. This has impacted their legitimacy in the eyes of the broader population, which will be explored in more detail in chapter seven.

Comparatively, Nadeen El-Kassem’s (2008) research on international democracy promotion in Iraq found that an outcome of such work was that those voices that were critical or oppositional to the content of the democracy promotion agenda were sidelined and marginalised. In terms of incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding practice, concerns have been raised about bureaucratic and elite tendencies that can easily exclude national women’s movements (Sainsbury & Bergqvist 2009), and over the perceived unwillingness on the part of the UN specifically to engage with alternative feminist frameworks (Al-Ali & Pratt 2009b; Gibbings 2011; Swaine 2009, 423). Sainsbury and Bergqvist (2009, 217) suggest that a bureaucratic approach limits any potential for a transformative effect on gender relations and instead gender work has “degenerated into a discussion of methods and techniques.” Some outcomes in Timor-Leste reflect these theories. What these theories can lack though is the role played by national women’s organisations themselves in shaping the priorities of the peacebuilding agendas. In Timor-Leste, East Timorese activists were central to maintaining the UN’s gender commitments throughout the peacebuilding phase. During UNTAET in particular, women’s organisations were influential on the gender unit’s priorities. Although such a role may be limited or structured in accordance with the UN framework, the agency it denotes should not be ignored. The relationship between women’s civil society organisations and UN peacebuilding is important and is complex with differential power dynamics.

National women’s organisations in Timor-Leste lobbied UN gender units post-occupation in order to garner support for their priorities. The relationships between national women’s organisations and gender units within each UN peacebuilding mission also meant that these
organisations were in part dependent on the presence and funding of UN peacebuilding. In 2005, UNMISET began to wind down and its successor mission, UNOTIL – a small political mission – did not contain a gender unit. Consequently support for women’s organisations from the UN considerably diminished. This resulted in the near total collapse of the East Timorese formal contemporary women’s movement which was now almost entirely represented by Dili-based women’s organisations (Olsson 2009, 82). One participant explained that the funding and training provided from 1999—2004 had solidified these organisations as the main interlocutors between the women’s movement and the UN in post-occupation Timor-Leste (Interview no. 26).

In 2006, as the peacebuilding and peacekeeping presence was launched again in response to the crisis period, donor funding again increased. Frustrations arose in successive missions, either from the gender units being sidelined within the missions or for the units’ limited engagements with East Timorese women’s organisations. One participant explained how she felt the UN’s pressure on the Government of Timor-Leste to institute gender mainstreaming in its own ranks was more limited than the UN’s involvement in other areas:

> Talking about the Gender Affairs under the UN body [UNMIT], inside the UN mission [the gender unit] should do the work in supporting the government and also SEPI, focusing on gender mainstreaming, but in fact there is no program. If we had a meeting, yes [they] went and participated but there is no real activity that we can see related to gender mainstreaming. And if we compare to other units [within UNMIT], like the human rights unit or the justice unit, yes, we can see that yes, at some points they did the work, like do capacity building and also support…or do advocacy. So they did some work, but especially for the Gender Affairs in UNMIT, nothing. So they have no real program (Interview no. 20).

Another example was frustrations among national women’s organisations when they felt unsupported by the UN presence. This was felt as a disempowering effect, especially when NGOs felt shut out of the development and reconstruction of Timor-Leste. The head of one national women’s organisation explained these frustrations in regard to UNMIT:

> We had a big trouble, or a kind of miscommunication. When we prepare for the [2012] general election, the [UNMIT Gender Unit] invited all the members of Rede Feto to a meeting, and every member came with their own program
and activities that we have conducted, this is a road map. And then for the conclusion of the meeting we hoped that it would be some [Rede Feto] members who would implement these programs, but nothing happened. This is a big frustration…every member, we presented all these things [to UNMIT] and after they collected all this information, they grouped [the information] and put it in one road map and then [there was] no conclusion for us [that is, no programs were given to the national NGOs to implement]. Because we hoped that we are the ones who will implement [these programs]…But they hired a national consultant…This is a conflict of interest I think. When they got all this information they thought this is their thoughts, when they accumulate this information all the programs that we give to them, and then they ignore us, we are as konvidadu [guests] (Interview no. 26).

This event was confirmed by the former head of a different women’s NGO (Interview no. 20).

Despite the work of women’s organisations in lobbying both the UN and the East Timorese national government, a DPKO review of UNTAET failed to acknowledge the role played by East Timorese women or the prior existence of women’s activism in Timor-Leste:

The gender unit of UNTAET was established in December 2000,7 the first unit of its kind to be established in a peace-keeping mission. It was instrumental in mainstreaming gender in all functional areas of the mission’s work and in supporting the creation of a national women’s movement (DPKO 2005, 35).

This statement disregards the role of East Timorese women in how UNTAET evolved its gender mainstreaming activities, belies the tensions that existed between East Timorese women’s activists, the gender unit and the broader missions and also attributes the UN with the creation of the women’s movement in Timor-Leste, which is demonstrably untrue. ATTRIBUTING THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL WOMEN’S MOVEMENT TO THE EXISTENCE OF GENDER SENSITIVE UN PEACEBUILDING MISSIONS SERIOUSLY UNDERMINES THE EMPOWERMENT MANDATE INHERENT IN THOSE MISSIONS’ GENDER FRAMEWORKS. IT FURTHER IGNORES THE POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE APPROACH OF UNTAET’S GENDER UNIT IN ADOPTING THE FIRST NATIONAL WOMEN’S CONGRESS PLATFORM FOR ACTION AS THEIR MANDATE. Moreover, not all areas of women’s activism successfully gained sufficient attention, such as their complaints of peacekeeper harassment (see Joshi 2005a, 2005b), which is dealt with in more detail in the following chapters. In her own case study, Emily Roynestad

7 This date is incorrect. The Gender Affairs Unit was established earlier than this in June 2000.
(2003, 2) makes similar observations, noting that while the UN made helpful contributions, “the process [of implementing gender norms] was nonetheless driven by East Timorese women themselves, without whose determination and persistence, progress would have been less far-reaching.” It is essential that women from the domestic or host state are an integral part of gender mainstreaming during peacebuilding, not only as a moral obligation, but because their lobbying can ensure continued commitment to particular issues. Roynestad (2003) claims that this is essential not only because empowerment cannot happen ‘by proxy’ but also because the UN cannot always be trusted to maintain its own commitments to incorporate a gender perspective.

Even so, the relationship between national women’s organisations and the gender units of UN peacebuilding has been more fruitful in Timor-Leste than elsewhere. In Kosovo during UNMIK linkages with local organisations were lacking, women’s groups felt ignored, and subsequently women’s organisations were wary of UNMIKs gender unit (Corrin 2000; Rehn 2001). Gender units were established in response to Resolution 1325 to improve women’s inclusion in post-conflict peacebuilding and acknowledgement of the contributions they already make, yet as a gender mainstreaming mechanism they can have varying impacts. Local women’s involvement is essential so that women are empowered to make decisions for themselves, rather than international ‘interference’ which sees decisions made for women with no input from women themselves regarding their own needs and interests (Corrin 2000).

In thinking of who is empowered by peacebuilding then, it is not simply that some individuals are empowered while others are not. Rather, there are those who are both empowered and disempowered by peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. While judging the empowerment mandate has come to rest on narrow measures of women’s representation, essentially an iteration of ‘gender balance’, the above analysis shows that empowerment is multifaceted. Women’s equality needs to be measured in both formal and substantive terms; meaning women’s formal representation in decision making does not represent in entirety the notion of gender equality. Nor can it represent all women as it can conceal differences among women and power imbalances between women. Those who have been empowered by such representation tend to sit within a middle class educated cohort, one that is not representative of the broader population. This on its own is not necessarily negative, but it does problematise the assumption that some women can represent broader notions of ‘women’s issues’ or can alter political, social and economic structures to better meet ‘women’s needs’. In regards to women’s collective activism, as the above discussion denotes, national Dili-based women’s organisations received funding, training and support from successive UN missions in Timor-Leste, or more
specifically, the gender units within them. This support was not meted out equally and collectives such as OPMT were marginalised from UN frameworks. Yet even those organisations who received support were frustrated at times where the presence of the UN impeded their activism around particular issues. The debate around quotas in the national political arena exemplifies this tendency.

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter suggests that the UN presence is not neutral or benign. In this case the UN presence was an influential part of the political backdrop on which East Timorese women advocated for their rights, and this had implications for the collective, substantive empowerment of women. On one hand, East Timorese national women’s organisations could lobby on the platform provided by international conventions, propagated by the UN. Within the missions themselves, gender units provided support, training and funding for the women’s movement to achieve their goals. On the other hand, individuals within the UN actively tried to prevent women’s organisations achieving one of their key platforms – a quota – especially as this goal was seen as inconsistent with liberal democratic peacebuilding frameworks. Moreover, women’s representation on village councils was instituted in the CEP, yet this program was poorly connected to national political decision making power, and thus where women’s formal representation was supported it was in an area that was disenfranchised from centralised authority. The chapter therefore demonstrates further that the implementation of empowerment has been more consistent with the ideals of liberal peacebuilding, rather than the reality of the East Timorese context, which was imbued with national-local tensions and class stratifications.

This chapter also raises questions about the degree to which the incorporation of a gender perspective into liberal peace projects is able to support indigenous women’s movements, demonstrated in the sideling of OPMT despite its mass based support. Such sideling occurs despite an explicit statement in Resolution 1325, which calls for the support of “indigenous women’s activities that contribute to conflict resolution.” At the commencement of UNTAET, the UN’s gender mainstreaming ideas were a separate entity in regards to East Timorese women’s activism, which was enmeshed in a decades long liberation struggle. The result was that the two were not always well connected, reflecting the centralised, bureaucratic nature of peacebuilding that eschews working relationships with politicised movements. Although successive missions have had particular empowering effects, the structure of UN peacebuilding could also prove a disempowering mechanism for women’s collective activism. The following chapter draws on a similar framework to examine women’s protection in UN peacebuilding. Similarly, it argues that protection in post-conflict reconstruction can be understood with
multiple dimensions. Taken together, the two chapters ultimately argue that women’s empowerment and protection in post-conflict peacebuilding come to rest on narrow understandings of each, not taking consideration of the (unintended) consequences of a militarised peacebuilding presence.
5: UN peacebuilding protecting women from violence

This chapter examines one of the key focus areas of incorporating a gender perspective into post-conflict reconstruction: women’s protection. Protection relates to women’s security and the prevention of violence. Security is a fundamental aspect of post-conflict peacebuilding and is institutionally conceived of consistent with traditional security perspectives: decrease in violence between armed actors who threaten the state or the internal population, and border protection. Despite the increasing salience of humanitarian rhetoric to justify international intervention, these interventions remain military-focused and militarised (Orford 2003, 11-12). Feminist scholars have critically engaged with this perspective to show how traditional military security perspectives ignore different types of violence that are just as pertinent to individual and group security, and that traditional security perspectives are inherently gendered (Stiehm 1982; Brownmiller 1975). Introducing a gendered perspective on security to the Security Council is a key achievement of the transnational activism that led to the adoption of Resolution 1325 (Cohn, Kinsella & Gibbings 2004, 10). In regards to women’s protection during conflict and in post-conflict peacebuilding, these resolutions have raised concerns with sexual and gender based violence before, during and after conflict, as well as highlighting the relationship between these kinds of violence and inter-/intra-state conflict. The analysis offered here argues first, that a continuum of violence can be identified in Timor-Leste that is associated with militarism, and second that this continuum was in part perpetuated post-occupation by the presence of militarised peacebuilding.

This chapter further argues that women’s protection came late onto the UN agenda in Timor-Leste. UNTAET in particular presided over a period in Timor-Leste’s history in which sexual, gender based and domestic violence continued unabated, and the mission has been accused of focusing on traditional military security to the detriment of women’s security (Groves, Resurreccion & Doneys 2009). Once women’s protection came more forcibly onto the agenda with the establishment of UNMIT, this focused predominantly on sexual and gender based violence and domestic violence perpetrated in the home and in the community. The increased attention to sexual and gender based violence reflects the increased attention the issue was garnering in the international arena. While women benefited from an improved security terrain after Indonesian withdrawal and the establishment of InterFET (Olsson 2009), challenges to women’s collective and individual security were still presented by the presence of heavily militarised peacebuilding missions. The occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers in Timor-Leste highlights that even when sexual and gender based violence came more strongly on to the peacebuilding agenda, this did not encompass abuse perpetrated
by UN and international personnel, which continued to occur in a climate of impunity. In short, there was institutional reluctance to engage with its own perpetuation of a militarised environment and its own limitations in promoting women’s security.

In Timor-Leste both men and women continue to suffer from the indirect, structural violence that is a result of a stratified, inequitable society. Development is poor and uneven with growing inequality (OHCHR 2011; UN News Centre 2011). Gender and development indices remain poor according to the UNDP’s Gender Development Index and Gender Inequality Index, especially in the areas of reproductive and maternal health and control over individual decision making. Birthing rates are high and access to skilled health workers to aid in deliveries is limited (Niner 2013, 250-51). While a broader view of security would certainly be relevant then, such as a human security framework, this chapter is primarily concerned with women’s protection from violence in Timor-Leste’s post-occupation period.

The protection mandate: violence in post-conflict contexts

The protection mandate in the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a response to increasing recognition of the ways in which war and conflict undermine women’s security. Thus policy responses aim to protect women from such violence and improve justice mechanisms. Resolution 1325 established the foundation for involving women in peacebuilding processes as well as calling on a number of parties to respect women’s human rights during and after conflict. Subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security have strongly focused on violence against women, especially sexual violence and exploitation. Although the term gender based violence can pertain to both men and women it is used more frequently in relation to the types of violence that women experience, an occurrence that Heidi Hudson (2012b) has suggested is a result of the conflation of ‘gender’ with ‘women’.1 In particular, Women, Peace and Security resolutions focus on sexual violence and rape as such violence constitutes war crimes and crimes against humanity, a fundamental denial of women’s human rights.

The increased attention to sexual violence in conflict in the international space is in part a result of mass rapes in the Darfur and Congo conflicts, both of which received widespread media coverage (von Braunmühl 2012, 167).2 Women, Peace and Security Resolutions 1820 (UNSC

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1 Gender based violence as a term is more often used to refer to women’s experiences of violence and women’s victimisation, however as Adam Jones (2000) suggests, men can also be victims of gender based violence in conflict. Jones (2000) highlights cases of gender selective mass killing in conflict, which he suggests predominantly target young males.

2 For example, in 2005 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that they were treating an alarmingly high number of rape victims – women, men and children – in Darfur, which they believed to be only a
2008), 1888 (UNSC 2009a) and 1960 (UNSC 2010) pay particular attention to sexual violence and call for better protection of women, improved reporting mechanisms and punitive actions for those who commit such acts. These resolutions also stress the continuing enforcement and strengthening of zero-tolerance policies for peacekeepers who perpetrate sexual violence or sexual exploitation. Security Council Resolution 1888 (UNSC 2009a, para 4) calls for the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary General to be appointed to coordinate with governments, civil society, military and judicial representatives and all parties to armed conflict to address sexual violence in armed conflict.

Understanding sexual and gender based violence and its relationship to conflict and post-conflict moments has been a key achievement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda promulgated since the adoption of Resolution 1325. Keck and Sikkink (1998, 165-98) detail the rise of transnational feminist movements advocating against violence against women in the 1990s, and which successfully linked women’s human rights to the broader human rights agenda. In spotlighting the kinds of violence women experienced, activists were able to draw across previous boundaries, such as class, race and geography, to detail the multitude forms of violence committed against women. Preventing violence against women and instituting justice mechanisms in response are vital aspects of gender inclusive peacebuilding. As war is often characterised by absence of justice and impunity surrounding such crimes there is a danger that impunity can continue into post-conflict moments (Pillay 2001). Moreover, post-conflict moments have been shown to be times in which women’s security is just as threatened as during conflict times, in the home and in the community (Pankhurst 2008b). ³

Although the issue of violence against women has been on the international agenda for over a decade (see Keck & Sikkink 1998, 165-98), the occurrence of sexual violence in conflict persists and mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice remain lacking. Resolutions 1820

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³ Sexual violence occurs in all wars, however the frequency, type and perpetrators vary (Wood 2011; Cohen 2013; Cohen & Nordás 2014). There is growing scholarship on the involvement of female combatants in wartime rape and sexual violence and women as violent actors more generally (Cohen 2013; Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). Dara Kay Cohen (2013) suggests that the dominant policy and academic understanding of male perpetrator/female victim may need to be revised. This work also reflects a growing body of literature which seeks to challenge the singular perspective of women as victims with limited agency in war and post-conflict (Meintjes, Pillay & Turschen 2001; Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012; Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). This literature highlights the multiple ways in which women contribute to war and post-conflict reconstruction, yet notes that women are more frequently characterised as victims, which means their contributions are often overlooked (Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012; Haeri & Puechguirbal 2010). A detailed analysis of a predominant ‘victim narrative’ will be discussed in the next chapter and its characterisation of women in Timor-Leste. This chapter however focuses on violence against women as it came to dominate security discourses on women in Timor-Leste.
(UNSC 2008), 1888 (UNSC 2009a), 1960 (UNSC 2010) and 2106 (UNSC 2013a) all note that sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against civilians continues, that its occurrence contravenes international law, and that mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice remain insufficient, thus contributing to a climate of impunity around such crimes. Following Resolution 1325’s recognition that women’s protection can contribute to the promotion of international peace and security, Resolutions 1820 (UNSC 2008), 1888 (UNSC 2009a), 1960 (UNSC 2010) and 2106 (UNSC 2013a) brought the issue of sexual and gender based violence more forcibly onto the international agenda. Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960 also call on the UN to continue to strengthen and enforce its zero tolerance policies regarding peacekeeper perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse. Importantly, these documents propagate what feminist international relations scholars and security studies scholars have been arguing for some time: that sexual and gender based violence impedes international peace and security efforts and that women’s security is linked to state security (Hudson et al. 2012; Gizelis 2009).

In peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, advocating for the protection of women and children has led to some key policy advances, and these constitute both internal and external dimensions, as with the empowerment mandate. As protection relates closely to security, internal approaches involve improving women’s participation in security sector institutions, such as within peacekeeping contingents and within national police forces. In terms of external dimensions (policy approaches directed towards host/domestic populations), Women, Peace and Security resolutions call for increased resources for victims of sexual and gender based violence, such as health and psychosocial support services, and an end to impunity for sexual violence in conflicts.

In addition to sensitising security sectors to issues of violence against women via increasing women’s representation in those sectors, gender teams within peacebuilding missions also advocate for improved legal protections for women in post-conflict states. In particular this focuses on legislation around sexual and gender based violence and justice mechanisms appear fundamental to the protection of women and the prevention of violence committed against women. For example, in Timor-Leste, the gender unit of UNMIT, in collaboration with UN agencies and local NGOs, played an important role in the 2010 adoption of the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV). The absence of such laws in conflict and post-conflict states contributes to the impunity that perpetrators of such crimes often enjoy and thus to a post-conflict culture in which violence against women is often silenced and largely overlooked (Harris-Rimmer 2010). Where sexual violations have gone unpunished during conflict it is particularly important to prevent such injustice continuing into post-conflict times. For this
reason, some scholars have also highlighted the necessity of gender sensitive transitional justice processes that hold perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence in war accountable, for its own merit and as a prevention mechanism for post-war violence (Harris-Rimmer 2010; Pankhurst 2008a, 9).

Another element of protection that has been emphasised by feminist international relations and security studies scholars is protection from violence perpetrated by UN peacekeepers in post-conflict peacebuilding missions. These analyses build on existing literature that has drawn out the relationship between militarism, masculinity, violence against women and insecurity (Enloe 2000). Cynthia Enloe (1989, 2000) and others (see Cohn 1993, 227-46; Cockburn & Enloe 2012; Kelly 2000) have examined and exposed the connections between militarism and the privileging of hegemonic forms of masculinity, the subordination of what is considered ‘feminine’, and in turn gendered violence. In essence, militarism facilitates the production and reproduction of particular hierarchical gender norms (Cohn 1993, 227-46). Enloe (2000, 4) specifically argues that while it requires both men’s and women’s acquiescence, militarism privileges masculinity while femininity or perceived feminine traits are devalued, thus women are subordinated in military hierarchies which can exacerbate their individual and collective insecurity.

As Liz Kelly (2000, 49) argues “it is militaristic culture which legitimises violence as a way of resolving conflicts [and] of establishing and maintaining power hierarchies within and between states.” To demonstrate these links, some authors have worked to expose the insecurity of women either attached to militaries, in the proximity of militaries or in militarised environments, such as in war and conflict (Brownmiller 1975, 31-40; Kelly 2000; Enloe 2000; Eisenstein 2007; Harrington 2010). This includes the occurrence of rape and sexual violence, prostitution as a common feature of conflict and post-conflict landscapes, and increased

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4 Continuing efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict are highlighted by the recent Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London in June 2014. The summit followed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict which was endorsed by the General Assembly in September 2013. The Declaration reiterated previous Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and called for holding accountable those who perpetrate sexual violence in conflict. It further emphasised that preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict was vital to resolving conflicts. The rationale behind both the Declaration and the Summit was that despite international attention to the issue, sexual violence in conflict continues while justice and accountability for perpetrators remains lacking.

5 This thesis takes Cynthia Enloe’s (2000) definition of militarism, who argues that militarism does not simply refer to those people directly attached to military bodies, or those practices that exist only within militaries. Rather, Enloe (2000, 3) argues that militarism suggests a broader process whereby something comes to be controlled by the military or depend on military ideals for its wellbeing: the more militarised a state, society or individual, the more military ideals and solutions are valued, even normalised.

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occurrences of domestic violence within military families and during times of conflict and post-conflict (Lutz & Elliston 2002; Lutz 2004; Eisenstein 2007; Schmitt 2004).

The presence of peacekeepers in a post-conflict context is often part of the ongoing militarised landscape, especially as peacekeepers are drawn from national military contingents (Whitworth 2004). Therefore, the connections that the above authors highlight – between militarism, violence against women and hierarchical gendered conceptions – also pertain to an analysis of peacebuilding, which entails a large militarised peacekeeping component drawn from the national militaries of troop contributing countries (TCCs). Indeed, Carol Harrington (2011) has suggested that Resolution 1325 was as much a response to reports of peacekeeper sexual violence as it was a response to transnational women’s activism and rights advocates. A fundamental concern of feminist security studies and gendered understandings of peacekeeping has been women’s experiences of violence in conflict and post-conflict moments, and its mitigation or exacerbation through international peace and security mechanisms.

From the 1990s onwards, some monitors in peacekeeping missions began to problematise institutional violence apparent in and connected to a large peacekeeping presence, such as brothels, prostitution and the sexual conduct of peacekeepers with local women (Harrington 2010, 145).6 Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers has been reported in Bosnia, Liberia, Haiti, Kosovo, Cambodia, Timor-Leste and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Amnesty International 2004; Csáky 2008; Human Rights Watch 2002; La’o Hamutuk 2001; dir. Lloyd-Roberts 2002; Martin, 2005; Mendelson 2005; Simić 2010a). These reports document peacekeeper involvement in a litany of exploitative and abusive behaviour, including: prostitution; trafficking of women and girls; the sexual exploitation of minors; rape; making pornographic videos with local populations; attendance at events in which women and girls are publically raped; the purchase of women and their passports for purposes of housework and/or sex; exploiting an economic advantage through the trading of material items such as food and clothing for sex; ‘peacekeeper babies’; and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Such expositions have not been limited to peacekeepers, nor are women the only victims, although a majority have been women and girls. Some cases have also involved humanitarian and aid workers from government and non-government organisations and private military contractors involved in post-conflict peacebuilding (Csáky 2008; Martin 2005; Olsson 2009, 163). In most cases

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6 Violence in peacekeeping missions is not simply gendered, but also intersects with race and socio-economic inequalities (Razack 2004). Sherene Razack (2004), in her account of peacekeeper violence in the UN missions in Somalia, argues that race and racism were fundamental to the occurrence of violence and how it was reported by western media. Razack (2004, 55) argues that the violence of western peacekeepers in Somalia is best understood as colonial violence, thus emphasising the racial aspect of such violence.
however peacekeeping staff associated with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) – military personnel – were identified as the most likely international perpetrators of sexual exploitation and violence during a peacebuilding mission (Csáky 2008).

Importantly, peacekeeper sexual violence bears similarity with the previously outlined concerns that traditional military approaches to security, which rely on militarism, undermine women’s individual and collective security (Stiehm 1982; Enloe 2000; Brownmiller 1975, 31-40). Supporting this link is the understanding that military personnel make up a majority of peacekeeping forces and that it is military personnel who appear to be the most likely perpetrators, though importantly not the only perpetrators (Whitworth 2004). Militarised, heroic protector narratives are often woven into peacekeeping missions as well, which delineate who needs to be saved and how they are to be saved (Whitworth 2004, 73). Thus, once reports of sexual violence and abuse began to surface in regards to peacekeeping missions, many feminist authors connected this to the prevalence of a military culture within peacekeeping missions, essentially theorising peace support operations as “militarised peacekeeping” (Whitworth, 2004).

The impunity that peacekeepers enjoy while on mission means prosecution remains lacking and a culture of impunity persists. When early reports of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers appeared there were apparent attempts of cover up and bullying to prevent disclosure (Harrington 2010, 156-57; Human Rights Watch 2002; dir. Lloyd-Roberts 2002). One of the first cases of a UN personnel being tried and charged in their home country was that of Didier Bourget, a French national put on trial in France for the rape of 20 young girls while working for the UN in the Central African Republic between 1998 and 2001 and the Democratic Republic of Congo between 2001 and 2004 (BBC 2008). In this case, the UN was accused of knowing about the abuse for some time, but only acting once it was exposed by a documentary in which a number of Congolese girls spoke about the abuse (Overington 2005). Recent reports of peacekeeper perpetration of sexual violence and abuse suggest that little has changed over the more than ten years since the UN has actively adopted and adapted policies to alleviate the issue (Aids Free World 2015). Such cases highlight that when discussing gendered security concerns in post-conflict zones, the actions of peacekeepers must also be taken into account.

**Militarism and violence against women in Timor-Leste**

The connection between militarism and sexual violence is evident in Timor-Leste and violence against women can be viewed against the backdrop of ongoing militarism, of which the Security Council mandated peacebuilding missions are part. Although sexual violence was committed
against men and women throughout the occupation period, women were the predominant targets of such violence. Prior to the occupation period, Muki Bonaparte (1976) alluded to the sexual exploitation of East Timorese women by Portuguese colonialists:

By separating [women] from their husbands through forced labor [sic], by depriving them of the means of sustenance for home and children, colonialism has thus created conditions which force women to sell their bodies into prostitution…besides providing cheap labor, Timor women constitute an instrument of pleasure for the colonialist bosses.

During the Second World War, Timor-Leste was used as a base by Allied forces who were trying to prevent the advance of Japanese forces amidst speculation that Japanese forces were planning to use the territory as a base for operations against Australia (Dunn 2003, 19). In return, the Japanese committed more than 20,000 troops to what James Dunn (2003, 19) describes as a “virtual occupation of the colony.” Aided by East Timorese, a much smaller Allied force of about 400 successfully impeded the advance of Japanese troops until their evacuation in 1943. This conflict and the ensuing Japanese military occupation after Allied evacuation had grave humanitarian consequences for the East Timorese.

Less well documented is that East Timorese women were also forced into sexual servitude by Japanese forces, the practice now commonly referred to as ‘comfort women’ (CAVR 2005a section 3.2, para 24). For example, Jill Jolliffe (2001) has reported that 25 women were held in barracks in Bobonaro, near the border with West Timor, who were “forced to have sex with queues of Japanese soldiers each night.” Jolliffe (2001) reported the underlying racial aspect to the rounding up of East Timorese comfort women, with the Portuguese governor at the time aiding in the process: “His justification…was to save European women from rape by Japanese soldiers by providing them with indigenous women who were already prostitutes – although there is no evidence the women in question were.” Some of these women have testified at international tribunals and have joined in advocating for an apology for the crimes committed against comfort women from the Japanese government (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 13-14). Reports of East Timorese comfort women only began to emerge at the end of Indonesian occupation and with the arrival of UNTAET (Chinkin 2001, 336). This history led some East Timorese activists and women’s organisations to request UNTAET to not allow Japanese military to return to Timor-Leste under the auspices of the UNTAET peacekeeping force (Jolliffe 2001). Twelve East Timorese organisations signed a petition to the Japanese government and UNTAET arguing against the deployment of Japanese peacekeepers, stating that the “Japanese government must
publicly acknowledge that past policies have caused great suffering to the East Timorese people” (see ‘Petition regarding deployment of Japanese Defense Force’ 2001).

Despite the presence of violence against women during colonialism, and the brief period of Japanese occupation, it has been argued that it was the Indonesian occupation period that instilled a “culture of violence” in Timor-Leste (De Araujo 2004, 141). Both women and men suffered during the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste between 1975 and 1999, from direct and indirect violence. Women suffered forms of sexual violence – as did a smaller number of men – that have come to be commonly associated with war and conflict and these abuses were carried out largely with impunity. In the initial days of Indonesian invasion women activists became targets along with other key political figures and their families. Muki Bonaparte and Isobel Lobato, both founding members of OPMT, were killed in the first days of invasion along with other members of OPMT (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 29). The sexualised nature of such targeted violence was not limited to women’s victimisation. As Peter Carey (2001, 258-59) has noted:

Some of the Indonesian acts of sexual violence have indeed taken on an almost ritualistic aspect and seemed to have been designed to eradicate the sexual potency of entire elite families. How else to explain the brutal way in which the family of the second FRETILIN President Nicolau Lobato…were hounded to their deaths with Lobato’s wife, Isobel, having a stake driven through her vagina, after being executed on the wharf at Dili during the 8-9 December 1975 Areia Branca massacre and his first cousin being publicly castrated and executed in Viqueque in 1980?

The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) report documented the wide range of abuses that women suffered during occupation (see CAVR 2005a, chapter 7.7; CAVR 2005b). Sexual harassment, sexual torture in detention, sexual slavery and public sexual humiliation were all prevalent (CAVR 2005a, section 7.7.4). Accounts contained within the CAVR report highlight the connection between military activity and women’s insecurity in Timor-Leste, stating:

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7 White sand beach.
8 Despite hearing evidence of widespread and systematic sexual violence throughout the occupation period (see CAVR 2005b), the Commission also concluded that many victims would not have come forward and that sexual violence was under-reported to the Commission, for reasons relating to stigma, humiliation and marginalisation. The Commission estimated the number of women subjected to serious sexual violations by Indonesian security forces to be in the thousands.
The degree of rape and other forms of sexual violence reflected the patterns and degree of military activity at the time. Sexual violence increased during periods of major military operations, and decreased when such operations were less frequent (CAVR 2005a, section 7.7.6 para 6).

The CAVR report further notes that sexual violence in Timor-Leste was sometimes used as a deliberate tactic as part of attempts by the occupying Indonesian forces to pacify the resistance movement, to “inflict a deep experience of terror, powerlessness and hopelessness upon pro-independence supporters” (CAVR 2005a, section 7.7.6). The aim was to force victims and all who supported the independence movement to accept political integration with Indonesia. Sexual violence was used to threaten and intimidate the population, to punish them where it was suspected that they supported the clandestine resistance or where their family members were known or suspected of fighting in or supporting the resistance (UN Commission on Human Rights 1999, para 81). East Timorese women were forced to become military wives and “ownership rights” of sexual slaves were sometimes passed on from an officer completing his tour of duty to his replacement or another officer (CAVR 2005a, section 7.7.6; Schmaedick 2001). Jill Jolliffe (2003) reported the case of Beatriz Miranda Guterres:

She was…forced to have sex with a Kopassus soldier under the threat that other villagers would be murdered if she did not. She was made to live with him for a year, became pregnant, and miscarried. When he finished his tour of duty…she was taken by a different soldier, by whom she had a child, and was then handed over to his successor when he too returned to Java.

Many children were born as a result of rape and sexual slavery, which has led to both those women who bore them and the children themselves being marginalised from their communities (Harris-Rimmer 2007). Those women who bore children with Indonesian military members, were ‘military wives’, and those who experienced sexual violence post-referendum upon deportation to West Timor, have been stigmatised and marginalised by communities (‘Scars of vote violence remain real for many East Timorese women’ 2000; Harris-Rimmer 2007). Cases of women’s forced or covert sterilisation or the forced use of contraception have also been reported, with some young women reporting being injected with unknown substances and later unable to conceive, although it is unclear how widespread the practice was (Inbaraj 1997; Braithwaite, Charlesworth & Soares 2012, 267). All these acts were carried out with impunity during the occupation period. According to the CAVR report (2005a, section 7.7.6), sexual violence was carried out:
…openly, without fear of any form of sanction…When victims of sexual violence or their family representatives complained…they were generally met with denial and aggression…There were no practical steps that could be taken by an East Timorese victim of rape or sexual violence to seek a legal remedy for such crimes.9

Evidence suggests that women who were forcibly removed to refugee camps in West Timor during the 1999 crisis were subject to sexual based violence and that this continued following international intervention in Timor-Leste. An International Rescue Committee report found that a “distinction in the nature of violence reported during and post-crisis [was] that displacement to a camp in West Timor was found to be significantly associated with reported rates of sexual violence post-crisis” (Hynes et al. 2003, 59). As part of a UNIFEM (now UN Women) initiative a baseline study into sexual and gender based violence in two districts was conducted by the Asia Pacific Support Collective in Timor-Leste (APSC-TL). The study found the impact of both colonialism and occupation continued to shape ongoing rates of gender based violence, and that the practice of providing women as “gifts” to official visitors during colonialism continued during occupation (APSC-TL 2009, 3). Violence against women in Timor-Leste is further exacerbated by economic dependence of women, lack of education, stigma, drug and alcohol use, lack of justice mechanisms, community attitudes, patriarchal attitudes and power imbalances (APSC-TL 2009). The study also found that in some cases women were the perpetrators of violence in the home, in particular where they were the primary breadwinner or the single head of household. In some cases women sustained exploitative practices by encouraging prostitution of daughters or family members and continuing the practice of a “gift” or “soft pillow” as described above.

**Protection in Timor-Leste**

Following the 1999 referendum, there was a preoccupation with dealing with the ongoing effects of violence in Timor-Leste; for example, the head of a national NGO who had returned to Timor-Leste in 1999 to help in the reconstruction of the country stated:

At that time [East Timorese women] were telling me stories of rape by the Indonesian soldiers, they were telling me about girls, their daughters being raped by the Indonesian soldiers, they [were] talking about their children that

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9 There was also small number of reports to the CAVR concerning rape perpetrated by FALINTIL soldiers. However accounts of FALINTIL soldiers perpetrating sexual violence appear more isolated and less systematic than that of the Indonesian occupying forces and the militia they supported.
were forcibly taken by Indonesian soldiers, they don’t know where they are now; many, many children like this. And then…they were also talking about the support that they were giving to the resistance, so this is…for maybe one year [after 1999] the talk of all women (Interview no. 22).

As argued previously, women’s activism in Timor-Leste cannot be divorced from the history of Indonesian occupation and resistance. Women advocated for their rights in the context of an occupied country and inherently linked their rights to Timor-Leste’s self-determination. This includes the right to live free from violence, yet independence has not necessarily brought this reality:

Timorese women believed that independence would mean the end to sexual violence. They believed living in a sovereign country with laws to protect all vulnerable groups would guarantee safety. In reality…independence has not prevented sexual or domestic violence despite many intensive campaigns stating such violence is a public crime and an abuse of human rights (APSC-TL 2009, 8).

As Susan Harris-Rimmer (2010, 1-2) has argued, independence has not seen the end to gender based persecution, but rather a “new manifestation of violence and subordination.” In the immediate post-1999 period, the frequency of violence decreased, whilst the types of violence that women experienced seem to have remained relatively similar (Hynes et al. 2003, 59). The most obvious statistical significance between pre- and post-1999 violence in Timor-Leste is the perpetrator of this violence: during the crisis the majority of perpetrators were identified as militia, Indonesian military or police, whereas post-crisis the majority of perpetrators were identified as neighbours, community members or family members (Hynes et al. 2003, 59; Joshi & Haertsch 2003; Interview no. 27). In particular, domestic and family violence have come strongly onto the post-occupation agenda since 2006. Academics and activists alike have therefore questioned who benefits from peace processes in Timor-Leste, and whether Timor-Leste’s independence has liberated men and women equally (De Araujo 2004; Harris-Rimmer 2012).

**Domestic violence**

Domestic violence in Timor-Leste largely captured the protection component of the Women, Peace and Security agenda promoted by UN peacebuilding missions and their responses to sexual and gender based violence. This was especially the case following the establishment of
UNMIT, which focused its attention on domestic violence. The continuation of domestic and family violence after conflict, and indeed its occurrence in peaceful states the world over, has led feminist authors to question traditional notions of peace and security (MacKinnon 2006, 141-59; 237-46; Lutz 2004; Lutz & Elliston 2002; Eisenstein 2007), consistent with the contention that war cannot and does not protect women (Stiehm 1982; Sjoberg & Peet 2011). The continuation of domestic violence post-conflict blurs traditional boundaries between peace/conflict, protector/protected and security/insecurity.

Moreover, it has been conceptualised as part of a “post-conflict backlash” against women in which women in post-conflict areas find their needs marginalised and their behaviours and rights restricted, often as part of romanticised notions of returning to a more traditional era (Pankhurst 2008a, 2008c). In Timor-Leste, a process has been evident which resembles a post-war backlash against women, which is in part represented in continuing high rates of domestic and sexual violence committed against them (Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 334-339; Hall 2009, 317-320; Niner 2011a; Abdullah & Myrtilinen 2009). By way of explanation, as Pankhurst (2008c) notes, the occurrence of domestic violence post-conflict is often attributed to the legacy of war and conflict, an attribution that is frequent in the case of Timor-Leste along with generalised attributions to ‘culture’ (Niner 2013; De Araujo 2004).10

A 2009—2010 Health Survey in Timor-Leste showed that domestic violence continued to be the most common form of sexual and gender based violence reported to the national police (NSD 2010, 225). The National Statistics Directorate’s (NSD) Demographic and health survey 2009-2010 found that 36 per cent of married women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence by a husband or partner and that only 24 per cent of women who had experienced violence from their partner reported it to anyone (NSD 2010; UNDP 2013). Domestic violence may be prevalent, however exact statistics are elusive due to inconsistent data collection and definitions, and some suggest chronic under-reporting (UNDP 2013, 5). Importantly, there is still a lack of in-depth reliable data that would enable more concrete patterns to be drawn since 1999 and the end of the occupation period. The 2003 Health Survey did not ask direct questions on domestic violence at the request of the steering committee11 and instead extrapolated figures for domestic violence by the “rate at which ever-married women refuse[d] to have sex with their husbands” (Ministry of Health & National Statistics Office...

10 Throughout my interview data participants used the word ‘culture’ as rationale for high levels of violence against women.
11 A steering committee was established under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and included representatives from the Ministry of Health, the National Statistics Office, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNFPA and representatives of bilateral donor organizations including the European Union and AusAID (Ministry of Health & National Statistics Office 2004, 15).
2004, 43). However, a report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) conducted in 2003 suggests that domestic violence rates remained relatively stable in the years immediately following 1999. The IRC study, which surveyed for intimate partner violence\textsuperscript{12} for the year prior to the crisis and the year prior to the interview (2002—2003), found that 46.8 per cent reported some form of violence in the year prior to the 1999 crisis and 43.2 per cent in the year preceding when participants were interviewed for the report (Hynes et al. 2003, 59). Abdullah and Myrttinen (2009) found that although the number of firearm incidents decreased post-1999 in Timor-Leste, the “sizeable majority” of cases involving small arms and light weapons were intimate femicide, and domestic and sexual violence.\textsuperscript{13}

UNTAET reports to the Secretary General and the Security Council discuss frequently the ‘internal security situation’ in Timor-Leste. In early 2000, this was seen to have been predominantly “normalised” under the influence of InterFET, mostly because ‘security’ chiefly concerned traditional law and order types of violence, such as militia activity, public acts of violence and securing Timor-Leste’s border with West Timor (Olsson 2009, 102). Louise Olsson (2009, 147-53) suggests that the primary concern of peacekeeping in Timor-Leste was to contain conflict related violence such as these. This claim is consistent with previously raised concerns regarding the limited focus of traditional security narratives, and that a traditional approach to violence and insecurity is gendered (Pankhurst 2008a, 8). Despite this preoccupation with public (male) violence, in a presentation to the National Council in 2001, SRSG Sergio de Mello stated:

\begin{quote}

\ldots nonetheless, we have no reason to be complacent. Too many women are the victims of crime, particularly violent crime. In Dili approximately 50 per cent of all reported crime involves violence against women (UNTAET 2001b).
\end{quote}

By the time of UNTAET’s close in 2002 reports to the Security Council were noting with more frequency the dramatic rise in cases of domestic violence and violence against women and children. Domestic violence came late onto UNTAET’s agenda and even then only through the activism of East Timorese women’s NGOs in collaboration with the Gender Affairs Unit (Olsson 2009, 102). UNMISET continued support for the national campaign against domestic violence. Sexual and gender based violence continues to constitute the most frequently reported

\textsuperscript{12} The IRC study questioned participants on types of conflict within their relationships. This is more limited than the definition of domestic violence used in the LADV, which captures an act or acts committed in a family context, not only between intimate partners, which results or may result in harm or physical and/or psychological suffering (Law No. 7/2010).

\textsuperscript{13} Abdullah and Myrttinen (2009) also cite lack of reliable statistics and data and base their conclusions on their own research and interview material.
crime to the police in Timor-Leste (APSC-TL. 2009) and within sexual and gender based violence, domestic violence is the most commonly reported (APSC-TL 2009; NSD 2010; UNDP 2013). With the establishment of UNMIT in 2006, some participants reported that attention to sexual and gender based violence, in particular domestic violence, began to dominate gender mainstreaming work in Timor-Leste (Interview no. 7; Interview no. 12; Interview no. 15).

Domestic violence has been widely discussed and the centre of a number of campaigns by both East Timorese activists and the international community in order to demonstrate women’s ongoing subjugation in Timor-Leste. The prevalence of domestic violence in Timor-Leste is commonly attributed to both cultural norms and the legacies of a 24 year violent occupation. Some participants claimed that it is inherently part of East Timorese culture, using this to explain why domestic violence occurs in the first place and why it is taboo, under-reported and minimised by the broader community (Group interview no. 1; Group interview no. 2). However, these claims are countered by both cultural activists and feminists, who argue that East Timorese culture does not inherently condone domestic violence (Niner 2013, 243). In 2001, Milena Pires, a well-known women’s activist and now Timor-Leste’s representative to the CEDAW Committee, attributed violence against women to the upheavals of occupation:

Women were involved [in the resistance] at every level…they don’t want to return to their traditional roles…It is a very traditional Catholic society which has been frozen by years of war. The men are trying to reassert their authority (in O’Kane 2001).

Incidences of domestic violence in Timor-Leste were also linked throughout my research to a history that has culturally condoned or at the least remained silent on such cases:

There are cultural aspects to [sexual and gender based violence] as well. For example, the mentality of both men and women, that it is ancestral and part of history; a common perception that women have no rights and that men have control. This is now changing because of outside influences such as TV, radio and civic education. Women think that it is better to remain silent, that they have no right to complain, and no right to confront violent individuals, that domestic violence should remain within the household. Because men are more economically empowered and mobile, if women make complaints of domestic
violence they are concerned for who will provide for the family (Group interview no. 1).

Although domestic violence was perpetrated during the occupation, little was done about it. This resonates with other accounts of domestic violence that see it increase during conflict yet at the same time become hidden within the national agenda (Kelly 2000, 59-60). In an interview with *The Japan Times* in 1999, Bella Galhos attributes this to loss of East Timorese men’s power in public life, stating: “they will find a place where they can play that role again. That place becomes the home” (in Mercier 1999). Moreover, there was no legal protection or preventative measures in place during occupation. One participant explained:

In the past Indonesian legislation is there, so if in the court there is mention that a husband beats his wife, it’s not a problem, it is semi-public, not a serious crime…Everyone in Timor-Leste, the man or woman, they don’t report it because for a long time they never, never, never get some space to respect their rights. (Interview no. 23).

The violent occupation period offered no recourses for prevention or justice, as Galhos (in Mercier 1999) stated: “There’s no way women are going to turn to the Indonesian military to come help with family problems at home.” The environment of occupation exacerbated the occurrence of domestic violence in a context in which there were ongoing human rights violations, violence and intimidation. One participant stated that prior to independence, sexual violence, domestic violence and incest were taboo subjects and were little talked about (Interview no. 15).

East Timorese NGOs were advocating around issues of domestic violence and sexual violence during the occupation and this continued into the post-occupation era. Earlier UN missions had rhetorically committed to combating domestic violence in Timor-Leste. For example, SRSG de Mello launched a nationwide campaign against domestic violence in 2002, stating that it was “a concerted effort, with the support of all political and civil society leaders of East Timor, alongside law enforcement officials” (in Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 15). A Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) was established within UNPOL, and the unit is now closely related to dealing with cases of sexual and gender based violence. As the director of a national women’s NGO explained, the unit improved police responses to domestic violence:
The UN provided a very good impact, especially to the police by working with [our organisation]. Before that they [the PNTL] only focused on fights between men in the community, but they didn’t care about domestic violence. But now they care about all the cases, especially domestic violence, they have a good relationship with [our organisation] (Interview no. 18).

The VPU, which existed in UNTAET, UNMISET and later UNMIT, were staffed mostly by women to address cases of sexual and gender based violence and domestic violence. However at the time of UNTAET and UNMISET, no specific legislation existed to deal with domestic violence. This meant that police could not ‘legally’ advance cases of domestic violence to the judicial system:

Therefore, the police of the VPU, along with victims of gender based violence, remained subject to searching for justice between the local justice system, colonial laws, and UNTAET regulations that remained during the transitional period, and which reinforced gender inequalities (Groves, Resurreccion & Doneys 2009, 198-99).

These inadequacies have been attributed to UNTAET’s preoccupation with state security while simultaneously presiding over a period in Timor-Leste’s history in which violence against women continued unabated (Groves, Resurreccion & Doneys 2009; Olsson 2009). Domestic violence rates in the post-conflict era remain high yet victims have often lacked the ability to access the necessary resources to help prevent and protect. Actioning the protection mandate has led to some important advances, in particular improvements in police capabilities by instituting the VPU. One participant noted more abstract benefits, stating that the work around sexual and gender based violence in Timor-Leste had helped in providing “space for women to be indignant about the violence directed towards them” (Interview no. 7).

In Timor-Leste, the culmination of advocacy around sexual and gender based violence was the adoption of the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV) in 2010. The focus on sexual and gender based violence from 2006 supported existing local ground swell around domestic violence and the need for legislative action. This was not only the UN mission but a partnership between UNMIT, UN agencies (UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women), and local and international NGOs (Hall 2009). In addition to the adoption of LADV, in 2012 the Government of Timor-Leste adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence in partnership with SEPI and UNFPA. Socialisation and implementation of LADV has had its difficulties. As one participant
explained, many people still “fall through the cracks”, such as women with multiple vulnerabilities – for example those with mental illness or intellectual disability (Interview no. 7). Socialising the LADV continues, largely conducted by national NGOs and women’s organisations, with support from SEPI and UN agencies.

Phyllis Ferguson (2011, 55) has highlighted flawed and incomplete VPU records and poor communication between ministries, UN agencies, national NGOs and the VPU as limiting the implementation of LADV. These issues reflect Cynthia Enloe’s (2004a, 225) claims that the “serious strategizing about domestic violence [is left] to the handful of feminists inside international agencies and their under-resourced allies in…local women’s agencies.” Enloe makes this statement as evidence of the continuing prominence of traditional state security perspectives that prioritise the cessation of violence between armed actors, the securing of a state’s borders and the monopolisation of violence under state control, while issues of domestic violence remain peripheral to ‘real’ security. Similarly, Donna Pankhurst (2008a, 8) notes: “all too often…the (re)-establishment of some degree of law and order merely means that men are not suffering such serious abuses at the hands of those holding power.” Although there are attitudinal and structural difficulties in the full implementation of LADV in Timor-Leste, that domestic violence was initially absent from the UN’s agenda, only appearing so forcibly from 2006, is indicative of the gendered nature of what is still considered ‘hard’ or ‘real’ security issues as opposed to what is not.

Unintentionally, the increased attention to sexual and gender based violence and attached funding directed towards it has meant that the language of gender based violence could appropriate larger portions of funding. One international participant stated “this has clouded other issues and has created a situation where programs are shaped in terms of gender when perhaps this is not the most effective way” (Interview no. 7). In particular some international participants noted that children were “off the radar” for UNMIT and that, despite supposedly being captured by the LADV legislation, this actually failed to occur in practice (Interview no. 7; Interview no. 10). The focus on gender based violence was suggested by another international participant to detract from other gender based concerns which were relevant to and inter-related with gender based violence, such as the economic empowerment of women: “in gender based violence programs, it is important to not underestimate the link with creating sustainable economic opportunities for women” (Interview no. 8). Focusing funding and programs on only a select area of gender equality ignores such a relationship (Interview no. 8). Another felt that there are some elements of ‘box-ticking’ in regards to identifying processes and impacts on gender equality within programs, rather than more practical engagement with gender equality in
Timor-Leste (Interview no. 12). Interagency cooperation has improved though and this is particularly visible in the collaborations that took place over a number of years to establish the LADV (Hall 2009).

**Protection from whom?**

Another area in which violence is perpetrated in post-conflict contexts is that perpetrated by UN peacekeepers themselves. This includes sexual violence, abuse and exploitation against women, girls and boys, and also other acts of violence against host populations. Sherene Razack (2004) has detailed violent acts committed against the Somali population by peacekeepers during UNISOM, especially against young men accused of stealing. The Abu Ghraib scandal in which prisoners were tortured and humiliated at the hands of US military personnel in Iraq also highlights that those who are sent to conflict or post-conflict settings with a mandate to maintain security and the rule of law can themselves undermine both. In Timor-Leste, sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of peacekeepers occurred, however the responses to these crimes have been less consistent and formalised compared to those relating to domestic violence. ‘Protection’ has predominantly been focused outwardly in Timor-Leste, which requires no reflection on the international political economy of peacebuilding and its contributions to women and men’s insecurity. Such an approach shuts down analysis of the gendered nature of post-conflict reconstruction itself, limiting any transformative potential in terms of gender equality, and adding women in only those ways that do not challenge the overall liberal peacebuilding paradigm.

In terms of jurisdiction, TCCs of particular peacekeeping contingents have criminal and disciplinary jurisdiction over military members of those contingents (Murray 2003, 508-10). The UN does not have the capacity to prosecute those found to be guilty of or suspected of sexual exploitation and abuse while employed in peacebuilding missions. Those suspected of such acts tend to be rapidly repatriated and very little disciplinary action is taken. The UN has strongly urged donor countries to try domestically those repatriated for sexual exploitation and abuse to make good on what many view as only a rhetorical commitment (Ferstman 2013).

In 2003, the Secretary General’s Bulletin, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse* (the Bulletin) was released which called for a “zero tolerance” approach towards sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions (UN 2003). It explicitly prohibited sexual relations with persons less than 18 years of age; exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex; and sexual relations between UN staff and beneficiaries of assistance, acknowledging “inherently unequal power dynamics” (UN 2003, 2). However,
this has not been without its own difficulties. Due to the apparent extent of under-reporting by
victims and a culture of not reporting incidences of abuse among personnel, the zero tolerance
approach can only respond to those cases that are identified (Otto 2007). In turn, because of the
legal framework set out by a Status of Forces Agreement (an agreement between the host
government and the UN concerning the privileges, immunities and criminal accountability of
UN personnel and peacekeepers) this will generally require quick action and close cooperation
between TCCs and the UN. While the UN can make moral claims about the ideal performance
of its personnel, it has often claimed that it lacks the mechanisms to respond appropriately or
enforce the measures. Jacques Paul Klein, while head of the UN mission in Bosnia and
Herzegovina, highlighted some of the bureaucratic shortcomings of zero tolerance:

> It would be nicer to have an internal mechanism to discipline officers…My
> policy here is zero tolerance, they’re sent home. The problem is your country
> and no other country will waive diplomatic immunity. It’s just that simple so
> nothing is going to happen, no matter how much you and I conjure about what
> should be done, it will not happen (dir. Lloyd-Roberts 2002 min 41:37).14

Following the release of the Bulletin in 2003, the UN launched an internal review in 2004 after
reports of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo made
international headlines (BBC 2005a, 2005b; UN News Centre 2005). Then Secretary General
Kofi Annan appointed the Permanent Representative of Jordan, Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-
Hussein to produce a report from the review, subsequently referred to as the Zeid Report (UN
2005). The Zeid Report (UN 2005) makes a number of far reaching recommendations. It
rightfully acknowledges the interplay of UN culture and organisation, coupled with the personal
perspectives of some peacekeepers that can exacerbate the occurrence of sexual exploitation and
abuse. Moreover, these factors contribute to the ongoing lack of prosecution and disciplinary
action in response to such cases (UN 2005). The Zeid Report claimed that the issue of
peacekeeper perpetration of violence was further compounded by inconsistencies in UN
organisation that saw a “mosaic” of varying rules governing different aspects of peacekeeping
missions with varying degrees of legal force at different points in time (UN 2005, 11-12). As a
consequence of the recommendations contained in the Zeid Report, Conduct and Discipline
Teams were deployed to active missions, including Timor-Leste and UNMIT. The UN’s

14 Jacques Paul Klein went on to head the UN’s mission in Liberia (UNMIL) where similar scandals
occurred (Lynch 2008; Martin 2005; Jennings 2014). Klein has been criticised for his inadequate response
to irrefutable claims of peacekeeper involvement in the trafficking and forced prostitution of women and
girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2005 Klein “abruptly retired”, a move which was later linked to
accusations of an “improper relationship with a [Liberian] woman suspected of passing on secrets to
Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president now on trial for war crimes” (Lynch 2008).
response to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers generally coalesces around the three pillars of prevention, enforcement and remedial action (Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013).

Despite these reviews there remain institutional problems in dealing with the issue of peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse. For example, a recent case involved the suspension of a UN aid worker for disclosing to French authorities internal accounts of French troop involvement in the sexual abuse of children in the Central African Republic (Laville 2015). Indeed a leaked internal report (Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013) suggests that the culture of the UN, the lack of enforcement and resultant impunity, has changed little since the release of the Secretary General’s Bulletin in 2003 or the Zeid Report in 2005. The NGO Aids Free World leaked the report in 2015, 10 years from the release of the Zeid Report, when the Secretary General’s February report to the General Assembly on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions seemed to ignore – and in some cases contradict – most of the findings and recommendations contained within the internal report (Aids Free World 2015).

Also problematic is that peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse bears a resemblance to the cultural and structural factors that see civilians the targets of sexual violence during conflict and the continuing lack of access to justice and support services for victims of such crimes. The Zeid Report found that TCCs that were willing to prosecute frequently did not receive full documentation from investigators on missions, or at least documentation that was not sufficient in the country’s legal system. Moreover, most post-conflict situations lack a properly functioning legal system, which means that those who are victimised generally have very few avenues to justice and are not offered the same protections as those in other countries (UN 2005). The impunity enjoyed by peacekeepers contributes to the understanding that there are fundamental institutional obstacles to providing justice for victims, ending cycles of violence and discrimination against women in peacebuilding operations and taking responsibility for a culture that perpetuates it (see Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013). Some suggest more measures could be taken, including ‘naming and shaming’ those states that fail to take legal action against repatriated peacekeepers suspected of sexual exploitation and abuse, or that the UN could work more closely with states to ensure legal action is taken (Defeis 2008; Ferstman 2013; Murray 2003; Stern 2015).

Throughout each mission in Timor-Leste there were cases of sexual violence and exploitation against East Timorese women and children, both boys and girls. All participants in this research, national and international, were aware of cases of sexual harassment, violence or exploitation perpetrated by UN personnel, however they often lacked knowledge on what happened to the
perpetrators or avenues available for justice. There was certainly a sense that international personnel were immune to the consequences of sexual harassment and exploitation and that the UN as an institution was inaccessible. As the director of one national NGO stated “Timorese people don’t know where to go to make complaints, to which institutions. What can be done anyway?” (Interview no. 1). One participant, who had established a local NGO prior to the 1999 referendum, stated:

Well you have some sexual violation when UN troops were here. When they had troops here there were a lot of cases of sexual violence and then guess what, these people are shifted out of the country as soon as…So they don’t face justice (Interview no. 21).

Especially problematic are the parallels that can be drawn with occupation experiences, with violence continuing to occur in a climate of militarism and impunity, albeit in starkly different contexts. Accessible justice and protection mechanisms, which people were knowledgeable about that kept the public well informed, were missing in both situations.

The UNTAET and UNMISET periods in particular were marred by sexual harassment. Women and girls continued to face harassment on the street by UN peacekeeping personnel similar to that which occurred during the occupation era:

Women during this period feared for their personal security as peacekeepers constantly harassed them as they walked to school or walked the streets with friends. Many women still traumatized by high levels of violence in the Indonesian period did not dare speak up against the UN peacekeepers and many young women kept out of the public arena to avoid unwanted attention. In the incidents where gender-based violence did take place, women were often blamed as they were accused of attracting male attention. In order to protect their own reputation, they said nothing. In the event that cases were brought to the police, they were handed over to the UN administrator, internally deliberated and the verdicts not disclosed. Many women’s groups suggested that the incidents were dismissed, accusing the United Nations as acting with impunity (Groves, Resurreccion & Doneys 2009, 203).

There were reports that a Jordanian contingent of peacekeepers was involved in a number of cases of sexual assault and rape, especially of young boys, while in Oecusse in 2001. Mike
Dodd (2005) reported that these cases were covered up or deliberately downplayed as Jordan was seen by the UN as an invaluable contributor to the Middle East peace process and was also the only country prepared to send troops to the Oecusse enclave. UN personnel were warned of terminated contracts should they speak to the media or discuss the cases (Dodd 2005). Further to this, while an UNPOL child protection team was sent to the area to investigate the claims it was only given a short time period by the “military-dominated board of inquiry” and its effectiveness and impartiality was subsequently called into question (Dodd 2005). Thus the priority given to maintaining effective international relations between UN member states creates tangible barriers to justice for victims of sexual violence or exploitation. Maintaining a legitimate militarised peacebuilding presence was prioritised over and above dealing with personnel perpetration of violence and exploitation (Joshi 2005a, 2005b).

The increased visibility of prostitution associated with the UN presence was also a concern in Timor-Leste. This included the increase of both East Timorese and international sex workers in the country. In 2004, a report on trafficking in Timor-Leste found that foreign sex workers were concentrated in Dili whilst in the districts sex workers were exclusively East Timorese (Caron 2004, 15). Prostitution in Timor-Leste predated the UN’s arrival, but increased demand is associated with the UN and international presence and the trafficking of women into Timor-Leste is associated with the demand generated by peacekeepers. Koyama and Myrpttinen (2007) claim that the end of UNMISET, which effectively ended the large peacekeeper presence established from UNTAET, is associated with a dramatic decrease in ‘business’ and in the number sex workers in Timor-Leste.

This situation is reflected in other post-conflict countries. In Bosnia, international staff made up approximately 30 per cent of the sex industries clientele but generated a majority of its profits, leading to the argument that “stopping internationals patronizing brothels is the only thing that will make the trafficking of women less lucrative” (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 71). In peace operations, peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and civilian advisors all earn exceptionally over the capacity of the local economy, making their contributions to a sex industry significant in its maintenance. Jennings and Nikolić-Ristanović (2009, 9) also highlight that the “prostitution infrastructure” established to meet the needs of an international presence associated with a post-conflict UN peacebuilding mission continues to pervade economies after the missions close,

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15 As mentioned above regarding Portuguese sexual exploitation of East Timorese women. In addition, the issue of prostitution has been heavily politicised in post-conflict Timor-Leste. The political elite prefer to frame prostitution as a malae (‘foreigner’) issue, meaning that its existence in Timor-Leste is reasoned only through the presence of the international community, “with little internal reflection of own behaviours” (Interview no. 12), whereas international staff are quick to point out that prostitution pre-dated the arrival of international peacekeeping forces.
including the continuation of trafficking into the host country. Jennings (2014) in particular has worked to highlight the impacts of a ‘peacekeeping economy’\(^{16}\) in a host country. Jennings (2014), analysing tripartite work industries generated as part of peacekeeper needs – domestic service, sex and private security (such as guarded living compounds) – argues that peacekeeping economies are inherently gendered. ‘Feminised’ roles, such as those in the sex or domestic service industries, are largely overlooked with little oversight or regulation, whereas the ‘masculine’ domain of private security is well regulated.

During my field research, a number of participants spoke of prostitution occurring as a result of the international presence in Timor-Leste; however whether this was inherently conceived of as violence or exploitation was more opaque:

It’s unavoidable, things happen in the government, things happen in the army everywhere. But the UN brings the troops, bring in the men…only, the unseen the unspoken impact, you have to have prostitution. This is what I’m saying. We have all these men, troops and this and that, and they need sex, they have to go for women that are available and they pay, you know, whatever they pay (Interview no. 21).

In Timor-Leste, prostitution was connected to bars, clubs and massage parlours as well as to police, private security firms and martial arts gangs, thus emphasising links between prostitution and organised crime (Ferguson 2011, 61-62). One participant explained how some families would attempt to profit from the demand for available sex workers in the post-occupation environment:

We have Timorese men in the families selling their women. They keep the money…it’s an organised little mafia. I’ve seen them with my eyes in 2002, there was a group of girls known as prostitutes who were in certain clubs that we visited at those times, but that’s normal, they go, they’re dancing…and then after the dancing the guys would take them in the taxi and you know…[the women] are sitting there, six or seven of them at the table and they have their men, uncles, cousins behind, so they go with the UN troops,

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\(^{16}\) Jennings (2014, 315) defines the peacekeeping economy as “economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence, of which a UN peacekeeping mission is a central component…Because peacekeeping economies refer to a totality of economic activity, it is necessary to include those whose livelihoods depend on the presence of a large cadre of international personnel but are not directly employed or (sub)contracted by an organization.”
Portuguese people and other nationalities. So who keeps the money? (Interview no. 21).

When UNMIT was established, brothel numbers were seen to increase following the relatively slimmed down mission UNOTIL, to deal with the increased demand brought on by the return of a militarised UN presence. There were reports of peacekeepers using brothels and sex workers and UN vehicles could be seen outside brothels and picking up prostitutes outside popular bars and night-spots (Interview no. 12; Murdoch 2007). At the same time an internal UN report had just been submitted to UN headquarters in which the exploitations of earlier missions, UNTAET and UNMISET in particular, were revealed. It noted a “culture that covered up perverted and outrageous behaviour by UN staff in [Timor-Leste] over years” (Murdoch 2007). Increased prostitution associated with peacekeepers in Timor-Leste (and elsewhere) is also associated with dramatic rises of HIV/AIDS (Ferguson 2011).

The key concern that dominated interviews regarding women’s potential sexual exploitation at the hands of peacekeepers was ‘peacekeeper babies’: children fathered to UN peacekeepers who have subsequently left the country. How to respond to peacekeeper babies has often eluded peacekeeping leadership; however such cases have been reported in every UN mission since the 1990s. For example, in Liberia it was reported that 6,600 babies had been registered as being fathered by peacekeepers between 1990 and 1998 (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 71). UNTAET however brought the issue to public attention as many East Timorese women claimed that UN peacekeepers had fathered their children and then abandoned them with no support (Simić & O’Brien 2014). There is little systematic research on the issue of ‘peacekeeper babies’ and the relationships that produce them, with more attention given to trafficking, prostitution and sexual abuse (Simić & O’Brien 2014). This is perhaps because ‘peacekeeper babies’ are not inherently born from exploitation or abuse and are also born from consensual relationships with peacekeepers (Simić & O’Brien 2014).

In my field research, ‘peacekeeper babies’ were not inherently or directly connected to violence, although a UN Population Fund (UNFPA) study conducted in Timor-Leste reported that community definitions of sexual violence included sexual relationships that “caused a woman to become pregnant but the male partner did not want to take responsibility” (UNFPA 2005, 16). During fieldwork, peacekeeper babies and the women who bore them were often placed in the context of the broader implications for women and their marginalisation within their

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17 In 2008 the UN General Assembly adopted the first resolution that framed a strategy to assist women sexually exploited and abused by peacekeepers, including children fathered by peacekeepers (UNGA 2008).
As sexual violence marred the occupation decades in Timor-Leste, consequently there have been numerous children born to wartime rape. These children and their mothers are marginalised in the community and lack financial and community support due to their low social status (Harris-Rimmer 2007). In the post-occupation era, there appears to be parallels between the marginalisation of women and their children born from rape and sexual violence and of women and their children born from relationships with peacekeepers, where the father has left the country. One participant, when discussing the treatment of those women who had borne children as a consequence of sexual violence committed during the occupation period stated that “[t]hey are treated the same as the women who had children with the UN. Same” (Interview no. 23). There was a similar sense of being unable to do anything about it, that no one cared and that the negative consequences and stigma would fall on the East Timorese women who had had such relationships with peacekeepers, such as in the following statement:

In the village, some UN staff married with Timorese women and then they leave; now they have a child here. No-one cares about it. Who is responsible for it? This is just women’s responsibility for it (Interview no. 23).

Zero tolerance, as with prostitution and sexual exploitation, was emphasised in Timor-Leste in regards to relationships between peacekeepers, international personnel and East Timorese. Such relationships are more difficult to categorically define as exploitative or abusive, with some noting concerns with the conflation of sexual abuse and consensual relationships with peacekeepers (Otto 2007; Simić & O’Brien 2014). Although these relationships can traverse grey areas of mutual consent, there are power differentials in terms of both position and income that need to be considered, thus making purely voluntary consent a contentious issue. Issues around consent become even more blurred once the relationship is over and the peacekeeper has returned home, especially if a child has been born. At this time economic concerns become
magnified and there is virtually no recourse for women to secure ongoing financial support. Touching on these related yet complex issues of consent and economic support, one participant explained:

There was a case...a woman, I think from Oecusse, with a child who demanded the UN for compensation. But you know the tricky thing is well who forced you? Was it forced? The guy has left, so the thing is the UN never pays compensation (Interview no. 21).

East Timorese NGOs and activists have been active in trying to bring to light cases of violence and harassment perpetrated by peacekeepers. A member of one East Timorese NGO suggested a more organic process to create awareness of cases, stating that when there was an occurrence of sexual harassment the NGO would try to make it public through social networking – for example via Facebook – or public sharing with friends. In this way they hoped to get it heard by making it public (Interview no. 1).

Vijaya Joshi (2005a, 2005b), an UNTAET staff member who worked in the districts, has argued that those issues that threatened the military hierarchy established within UNTAET were overlooked and that military priorities took precedence, which is consistent with Enloe’s (2000, 3) definition of militarism. Women’s advocacy activism around peacekeepers’ violence towards women was largely ignored by UNTAET (Joshi 2005a, 2005b). Advocacy around women’s political participation gained more publicity and attention, although their advocacy for equal opportunity in political participation was not without its problems, as discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast, activism around peacekeeper sexual violence has been sidelined through most of each mission. After activism from national women’s organisations and UNTAET’s Human Rights Unit, UNTAET leadership did request investigations into the most publicly known cases of peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse (Olsson 2009, 110). At the beginning of the 2006 crisis when it became apparent that an increased UN peacebuilding mission, with a large peacekeeping component, would be required, members of Rede Feto wrote to Ian Martin (at the time Special Envoy for the Secretary General in Timor-Leste) to express what they saw as the key concerns that should be taken into consideration. One concern was the conduct of peacekeepers while on mission in Timor-Leste. Rede Feto recommended that the UN enforce its policy to prevent sexual exploitation and investigate past allegations of sexual exploitation and

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18 The UN’s Comprehensive Strategy (UNGA 2008) gives no obligation to the UN to support mothers and their children financially, but instead for the UN to assist with legal services, in claims related to paternity and child support, and immediate material care such as food and shelter (Simić & O’Brien 2014).
abuse by UN personnel (Re de Feto 2006). East Timorese women were seemingly familiar with the unintended consequences of a militarised UN presence.

Zero tolerance was heavily emphasised in Timor-Leste following reports of peacekeeper misconduct in each mission. The Gender Unit of UNTAET established cultural sensitivity training for incoming peacekeepers, but it was UNMISET that established briefing sessions specifically on sexual exploitation and abuse, with international staff from UNPOL, peacekeeping contingents, and UN Volunteers attending (Ospina 2006a, 11). The second UNMISET SRSG Sukehiro Hasegawa also established a commission to investigate claims of peacekeeper sexual misconduct (Koyama & Myrttinen 2007, 29). The enforcement of zero tolerance however is more complex, as discussed above. In Timor-Leste it was described that:

Despite UN mission zero tolerance policies, they do not work: recently when UNPOL officers were found to be trafficking, their contracts were “withdrawn.” The raids and UN policies served to deflect sex working off the streets, out of the brothels and into more call-ins, house-based, less-visible activity. Two way extortion, by bar, club, massage parlor and/or brothel owners and operators and by the police, local security company guards and martial arts groups, all with overlapping memberships have contributed to rising cases of prostitution, drug use and corruption (Ferguson 2011, 61-62).

What the above also highlights is the relationship between a UN peacekeeping presence and on the ground criminal and exploitative activity. It was not simply UN peacekeepers that sustained a prostitution industry with links to trafficking; rather, the presence of UN peacekeepers and the demand this created for a prostitution industry intermingled with actors in Timor-Leste who could provide and also partake of such an industry. Zero tolerance was seen as insufficient by some participants in Timor-Leste who felt that this approach, at best, merely removed offenders from the country and that it did not provide formal avenues for justice or compensation to victims:

The only problem that I don’t really agree with was the system in terms of the security and the military. So these people they came here and they also [commit] violations against the Timorese women and also some of them they stay together with Timorese girls and then after the girl has a baby they just left them, without any responsibility…The Timorese women and also the NGOs, they made a big protest against this kind of attitude. So during
UNMIT, [former SRSG Atul Khare] started to apply zero tolerance for all UN staff who were involved…or who are the suspects of the sexual violation. But at the end there is still no formal way, or formal justice for them, so it’s not clear at all. So zero tolerance and then after that what next? So it’s not clear. They just leave, they go, you never know what happened next (Interview no. 20).

The case of Timor-Leste further emphasises previously made claims regarding impunity for peacekeepers who perpetrate sexual exploitation and abuse while on mission. Henri Myrttinen (2014, 193) has reported that UNMIT’s SRSG Atul Khare proclaimed a renewed emphasis on zero tolerance in response to staff frequenting “blacklisted” clubs and brothels, but that this was loosely enforced: “[c]ircumvention of the UNMIT zero tolerance policy by UNPOL was more or less an open secret, fostering an institutional culture of impunity with respect to sexual misconduct.” Accountability appears to fall through a web of complex legal obligations that fall to troop contributing countries, inaction on behalf of both UN headquarters and particular mission leaderships, under-reporting and a failure to pass on information to domestic populations. The VPU was also supposed to aid in investigation of such claims, but as one participant explained, there were frequent frustrations with the way the VPU handled cases and the ability for those in Timor-Leste to follow the progress of cases:

So after that the UN also support the police, the Timorese police, by building the VPU to support those, especially women, who [were victims of] violation. But what happened was that the [international] staff who are working here, they keep changing every six months or every one year. And mostly when they change they take all the documents. So you lost the chronology of what’s happening or what’s going on with these victims…So the administration or the filing system is really bad and we kept losing the documents and it really affected the victims to get access to justice. And justice would take longer and longer, and even years and years.

So the international staff members of the VPU change frequently and they take the documents…back to UNHQ or back to…?

Nobody knows! They just go and then the document disappears (Interview no. 20).
This statement reflects the findings of the leaked internal UN report that found the continuance of endemic failures and long delays in investigations of peacekeeper sexual misconduct, despite over a decade of commitments to prevent it and enforce consequences (Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013).

Transitional justice is argued to underpin the establishment of rule of law in post-conflict countries (Hayner in Pankhurst 2008a, 10-11). Where this is lacking, some authors have suggested that this contributes to or maintains lack of accountability in newly established justice mechanisms. Codifying and responding to gender and sex based violence in transitional justice mechanisms is also vitally important in reconstructing post-conflict societies (Ní Aoláin, Haynes & Cahn 2011, 152-74; Harris-Rimmer 2009, 85). Wandita, Campbell-Nelson and Pereira (2006) point out that justice for occupation era crimes in Timor-Leste has been ad hoc and insufficient and that a credible mechanism is unlikely without international support (Wandita, Campbell-Nelson & Pereira 2006; Kent 2011, 2012; Harris-Rimmer 2009; Porter 2012), although some measures have been implemented. Women in particular have received inadequate justice in the post-occupation period, and gender based crimes inadequately punished in international and domestic mechanisms, as well as continuing prevalence of gender based violence (Harris-Rimmer 2010).

Additionally, transitional justice processes have been even less satisfactory in terms of crimes committed predominantly against women, such as sexual violence (Harris-Rimmer 2009, 2010). The UN’s (especially UNTAET’s) failure to properly instigate adequate transitional justice mechanisms has been argued to perpetuate a culture of impunity in regards to violence, and violence against women in particular, and also to the ongoing marginalisation of those women who bore children as a consequence of sexual violence (Harris-Rimmer 2009; Wandita, Campbell-Nelson & Pereira 2006). Wandita, Campbell-Nelson and Pereira (2006) found in

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19 Judicial and non-judicial responses implemented in response to human rights violations in Timor-Leste before, during and after the 1999 referendum include: a UN Commission of Inquiry established in 1999; a Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) and Special Panel for Serious Crimes in Timor-Leste, established under UNTAET and continued into UNMISET; a Commission of Experts appointed by the UN Secretary-General in February 2005; and the CAVR Truth Commission (Wandita, Campbell-Nelson & Pereira 2006, 287). Susan Harris-Rimmer (2010, 139) has argued that the “transitional justice processes set in place by the UN and Indonesia are cause for deep concern in terms of their adequacy.”

20 In addition to the international community’s lethargy in this regard, the current national political climate does not support more holistic transitional justice mechanisms, where, according to two participants, the dominant narrative is one of “moving forward”, reconciliation and the “normalisation” of relations with Indonesia (Interview no. 10; Interview no. 14). There are also rhetorical tensions between ‘victims’ and ‘veterans’, with the two groups distinguished and dealt with separately. A distinction between victims/veterans is arbitrary and has resulted in the needs of ‘veterans’ (armed men) getting dealt with over those of victims, rather than responding to their needs mutually and simultaneously (Interview no. 7; Interview no. 13). The distinction between ‘victims’ and ‘veterans’ is gendered (MacKenzie 2010).
their research that justice is extremely important to East Timorese women, for economic and political empowerment, and to not be “left behind” in independent Timor-Leste. The continuation of violence against women is attributable in many respects to cultural aspects such as a “common perception that women have no rights, that men have control” and that “women think it is better to remain silent and that they have no right to…confront violent individuals” (Group interview no. 1).

Yet this can also be connected to the ongoing culture of impunity, at many respects exacerbated by lack of justice: impunity for crimes committed against women during Japanese occupation of the territory during WWII, the Indonesian occupation era and for abuse committed against them by peacekeepers in the post-occupation period. Rape, for example, was used during the occupation period to control populations and was never condemned at high levels, which, as one participant explained, “has left behind a legacy of violence against a portion of the population” (Interview no. 10). Where rape and sexual violence during war are not sufficiently prosecuted in its aftermath, this can leave behind a legacy of injustice and the same crimes in the post-war period continue to occur with impunity (Pankhurst 2008a, 9). Insufficient measures to address the violence of 1999, of the occupation period more broadly, and of violence against women in particular arguably perpetuates a culture of impunity around sexual and gender based violence in post-conflict countries (Harris-Rimmer 2009; see also Wandita Campbell-Nelson & Pereira 2006), which includes that facilitated and perpetuated by the presence of an international peace intervention.

**Conclusion**

From 2006 women’s protection came more forcibly onto the UN’s agenda in Timor-Leste. The establishment of UNMIT was able to capitalise on the existing ground swell around the issue of sexual and gender based violence committed against women in post-occupation Timor-Leste. As a result there were some key policy successes, notably the adoption of the LADV and the National Action Plan on gender based violence. Yet the ongoing presence of militarised peacekeeping undermined individual and collective security in that peacekeepers themselves perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse while on mission, including prostitution, trafficking, child sexual abuse, fathering ‘peacekeeper babies’, sexual assault and rape. The UN response to these crimes was less well coordinated and successive missions in the country were perceived as lacking transparency and accountability in regard to peacekeeper crimes. Similar issues with occupation-period gender violence permeated into the post-occupation period then, perpetuated by the presence of militarised peacekeepers, including continuing impunity for gender based violence and lack of access to justice for victims and their families. While sexual and gender
based violence featured prominently as a gender issue in the UN missions, especially during UNMIT, this tended to focus on domestic and intra-familial violence, rather than that perpetrated by peacekeepers, which has seen ad hoc, uncoordinated measures applied to it. The UN presence permeated an ongoing militarised (hyper-masculine) landscape (Niner 2011a). This is a shortcoming of international peacebuilding interventions, ones that do not respond to their own relationships with normative gender conceptions that subordinate women or their own perpetuation of insecurity and disempowerment. Security, traditionally defined, is improved through the cessation of conflict, yet gendered violence can and does continue, which peacekeepers themselves contribute to.

Taken together both the protection and empowerment mandates of the Women, Peace and Security agenda make important advances for a feminist and gender sensitive peacebuilding agenda. However, as the case of Timor-Leste demonstrates, the implementation of this agenda in UN peacebuilding rests on narrow understandings of both protection and empowerment. Moreover, the UN presence – often unintentionally – can undermine both women’s protection and women’s empowerment in some key respects, as their processes stay more consistent with the dominant paradigm of liberal peacebuilding which does not challenge gendered conceptualisations that imbue UN peacebuilding. The following chapter therefore examines conceptual limitations of gender in UN peacebuilding, arguing that these limitations are both gendered and gendering, having important implications for the way that women in particular, through their discursive attachment to gender, are incorporated and made visible in post-conflict peacebuilding.
6: Conceptual limitations: gendering identities in peacebuilding

The previous two chapters examined the twin mandates of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and their implementation in Timor-Leste: women’s empowerment and women’s protection. Building on this discussion of limited notions of women’s empowerment, security and agency in the preceding chapters, this chapter argues that the discourse and practice of gender in UN peacebuilding represents a particular cultural framework that defines who gender pertains to and what actions it delimits. These conceptualisations of gender in turn shape the implementation of gender policy. While the preceding chapters examined limited notions of both women’s empowerment and women’s protection in post-conflict reconstruction, they paid more attention to how the actual presence of UN peacebuilding can undermine both. This chapter brings conceptual limitations more firmly to the fore, arguing that women are discursively constituted in peacebuilding as victims with limited agency. The analysis of these conceptual limitations in the case study of Timor-Leste highlights how they carry over into implementation, producing a more limited scope than what was envisaged in Resolution 1325 (Cohn 2004, 2008; Eveline & Bacchi 2005). How ‘gender’ is understood and conceptualised is important for the design of policy approach and subsequent outcomes in implementation (Eveline & Bacchi 2005). In essence UN engagement in post-conflict reconstruction is part of the socio-political landscape which both shapes and is shaped by normative gender conceptions.

The chapter begins by outlining two identified limitations in the UN’s conceptualisation of a gender perspective. First, is the aforementioned ‘gendering’ process that attaches gendered attributes to women (and men) based on sex difference. Second, is what is termed a ‘victim narrative’, in that women are especially characterised as victims: of war, of (some) men, and of patriarchy, problematic in that it conceptualises women with limited agency. In addition, it is argued that this reflects critical feminist perspectives that suggest third world women are more readily characterised as victims, especially of ‘culture’, locating their victimisation as particular to the national space and not as a result of international processes (Kapur 2002; Kunz 2014). The examination in this chapter argues that a victim narrative can undermine the empowerment mandate, stressing instead women’s protection. While women’s protection is essential, there are evident tensions between the practice of women’s empowerment and women’s protection in peacebuilding where protection comes to be stressed over and above empowerment, further subordinating women to patriarchal protection (see Hudson 2012a). In gendering, the chapter argues that UN gender policies contain gendered assumptions about what women can do or should do in post-conflict reconstruction.
**How does UN peacebuilding ‘gender’?**

One of the fundamental conceptual limitations of how ‘gender’ is understood and practiced within UN peacebuilding is its frequent conflation with ‘women’ (Shepherd 2011). The social construction of gendered roles occurs via UN peacebuilding generally and via gender mainstreaming practices in particular, meaning there is evident a ‘gendering’ process. The problem with this process is that it assumes that gender is a fixed, objective fact about an individual (Charlesworth 2008, 359). By connecting gender with biology, its social construction is overlooked and it “reaffirms the ‘naturalness’ of female/male identities and bypasses the performative aspects of gender” (Charlesworth 2008, 359). As gender mainstreaming is ostensibly focused on improving women’s empowerment and women’s protection, the resultant justifications for women’s increased presence in peacebuilding delineate gendered assumptions about what women can or should do in post-conflict reconstruction.

Additionally, in peacebuilding ‘gender’ work roles within the UN – such as gender focal points or gender advisors – are typically given to women, sustaining a presumption that gender work not only specifically pertains to women but that ‘gender work’ is women’s work (Tiessen 2005). To be sure, part of sensitising peacebuilding to both gender issues and women’s marginalisation is to increase the number of women in decision making roles. Yet gender advisors and gender focal points are often marginalised within units and gender programs are often marginalised within missions more broadly; the gender component of peacebuilding and peacekeeping is not taken as seriously as other ‘essential’ functions (Tiessen 2005). Moreover, while women are well represented among ‘gender’ areas they remain under-represented in other decision making areas and as peacekeeping personnel (Dharmapuri 2013; Weiss 2012, 119-23). Therefore there appears to be a gendered hierarchy contained within UN peacebuilding in that women are given gender work which is marginalised within missions, or as Hilary Charlesworth (2005) puts it, the creation of a “women’s ghetto” within peacebuilding with less power and resources. As gender work becomes women’s work, this positions women’s interests around gender, rather than broader political, social and economic issues. As Al-Ali and Pratt (2009b, 72) argue, it also prioritises women’s “gender interests”, rather than those that may be constructed around class or race.

Gender, along with human rights, is viewed as a ‘soft issue’, which is in opposition to ‘hard’ issues like military security and policing. As explained by one participant:

> With gender you have to have something you can show as evidence very quickly. It’s not a bleeding heart issue, you’ve got to be able to say we’re
working on this, this is our program, these are going to be our deliverables, our outputs and our outcomes. And that’s very, very important because otherwise people think you’re doing nothing…It’s an idea of soft issues, it’s an idea of well what are you doing? Because you know it’s an area that there is very little comprehension about it. There’s a huge amount of miscomprehension, a huge amount of misunderstanding. Some of that is deliberate…because there are those that don’t want to understand it and want to block the issue (Interview no. 28a).

The perception that gender is a soft issue potentially exacerbates a reliance on quick fix or technical approaches, ones that conform to institutional language rather than a transformative political agenda. The gap between feminist rhetoric and the way in which it is applied in gender policy is argued to be a constraining factor on the ability of gender mainstreaming to have a transformative socio-political effect (True 2003). A report to the Secretary General on UNTAET’s implementation of Resolution 1325 found similarly. It stated that one of the primary challenges for the mission was to “overcome the view that gender and human rights are ‘soft’ issues that take resources away from the ‘core’ functions of the mission’s mandate, such as establishing a judiciary or power authority” (Brandt 2001). This experience of UNTAET is consistent with Cynthia Enloe’s (2005, 280) argument that gender is “not [considered] part of the crisis [and] indeed, distracts from the central concerns of the crisis.” From this perspective, gender work is not only unnecessary but actively undermines other areas of the peacebuilding mandate through the funnelling off of essential resources, even though gender units and staff remain under-resourced. This perspective is also further representative of the institutional barriers to fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The basis of such an assumption is that nothing is gained from investing the resources it would take to understand women’s lives and to take gendered relations and gendered identities seriously in post-conflict reconstruction (Enloe 2005).

An awkward precedent is therefore set where women are added for appearance but the substance of their inclusion or an understanding of how gender may influence an individual’s conflict experiences and post-conflict needs in varied and complex ways can be ignored. It also sets a precedent for issues that fall under the category ‘gender issue’ to be ameliorated by the addition of women, what Heidi Hudson (2012b) terms the “liberal additive approach.” This approach is fundamental to the ‘gendering’ of women in liberal peacebuilding as women are not only gendered, but they come to embody the gender component of peacebuilding (see Shepherd 2011; Hudson 2012a, 2012b; Kunz 2014).
Through the reproduction of gendered categories, the rhetoric of gender in peacebuilding does little to challenge the gendered power hierarchies that have characterised war and post-war moments. Tarja Väyrynen (2004) argues that the discourse of gender promoted by the UN reproduces essential categories for both masculinity and femininity, ascribing gender roles to each. In turn, these essentialist and hegemonic gendered understandings get incorporated into the UN’s existing state-centric structures without fundamentally challenging them. Consequently, the aims and outcomes of gender mainstreaming perpetuate the dominant rhetorical and cultural frameworks embedded in UN policy and practice:

The aim is thus not to think…critically [about] the structures that have rendered gender silent in the first place [but] rather to add the gender element to the existing state-centred and patriarchal practices of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Väyrynen 2004, 138).

In incorporating a gender perspective in order to overcome gendered inequality, the policy of gender mainstreaming itself embodies constitutive power in terms of gender norms. This statement draws on post-structural feminist literature that argues that the concept of ‘gender’ has come to rest on the same stable binaries as those normative conceptions that have historically perpetuated discrimination. Judith Butler (2006, 6-8) questions the use of an undifferentiated, stable category of ‘women’ as the subject of feminism. Butler claims that this excludes consideration of other axes of power, such as class, ethnicity and so on: “These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes.” In peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming rests on women as the subject of gendered security and gender has been applied in a way that reproduces such stable binaries, in turn contributing to their normativity (Kunz 2014). This is arguably the logical consequence of a liberal feminist approach that adds women to an imperfect institution, such as the UN, without challenging the underlying infrastructure that reproduces gender hierarchies. As Hudson explains “gender equality is not a panacea for a dysfunctional system” (Hudson 2012b, 88). Thus the gender element contained in UN peacebuilding policy and practice is itself both gendered and gendering, ultimately leaving existing hierarchical arrangements intact.

Such gendering has meant that particular roles and attributes have been attached to women through their assumed femininity. In conducting a discursive analysis of Women, Peace and Security resolutions, Laura Shepherd (2011) found that the resolutions ‘constitute’ women and what they “might be, do or want in the field of gender and security.” Demands to increase
women’s participation in peacebuilding have come to rely on these tropes, justifying women’s inclusion on the basis of assumed inherent skills and traits. In peacebuilding this has most frequently led to a characterisation of women as inherent and natural peacemakers, thus making their incorporation into peacebuilding not only a necessity for the attainment of gender equality but also as following a simple gendered logic. For example, a report of the Secretary General on Timor-Leste stated that “women’s skills as peacemakers and peacebuilders should be utilized and strengthened so that they may participate in and lead community reconciliation and healing efforts” (UNSC 2006b, 14). Therefore, even with the increased visibility of gender and women in international peace and security discourse, the dominant narrative continues to rely heavily on gendered stereotypes and subordination (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007).¹

This is not necessarily a new occurrence, as war has often been justified on the grounds of ‘protecting’ women and vulnerable citizens (Stiehm 1982; Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 4; Sjoberg & Peet 2011). Judith Stiehm (1982) wrote of the protector/protected paradigm perpetuated in war, in which the protector was invariably male whereas those requiring protection were female. The protection myth is a powerful narrative with long associations with war and colonisation projects, and one that is fundamentally rooted in notions of feminine dependency. Yet evidence of individual experiences in war and post-conflict reconstruction has increasingly strained the notion that wars can be fought to protect women, or anyone (Sjoberg & Peet 2011).

The same simplifications are relied on in calls for increasing the number of female peacekeepers in police, military and civilian components. Increasing women’s participation in previously male-dominated domains such as military and police contingents in peacekeeping missions is argued to improve the missions’ effectiveness, especially in relation to the mission’s ability to respond to those issues seen as gender or women’s issues (Dharmapuri 2013, 7-8). Female peacekeepers are seen to increase trust in a mission, relate better to local populations, improve behaviour of male counterparts (that is, reduce the sexually exploitative behaviours of male peacekeepers) and are able to carry out tasks that men either cannot or should not do, such as body searches on women and dealing with domestic and sexual violence cases (UNDAW 1995; Hendricks & Hutton 2008; Dharmapuri 2013, 7). In terms of performing a pacifying function on the behaviours of male peacekeepers, this simply places the onus on women to combat sexual exploitation in peacekeeping missions, rather than on the peacekeepers who perpetuate this behaviour themselves (Simić 2010b). Indeed, Carol Harrington (2010, 145-46) has suggested that feminist discourse was deliberately utilised to give peacekeeping operations a “nurturing

¹ Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) analyse the public treatment of female perpetrators of violence in war, cases which would seem to disrupt the dominant narrative of women as peaceful, yet highlight that they actually buttress the narrative by being presented as aberrations.
rather than lecherous face”, continuing that in the process “peacekeeping security actors [therefore] mobilized feminist discourse to reassert their global military and policing actions as ‘empowering’ female victims…..” Assumptions about the pacifying influence of women in peacekeeping missions are made despite reports of bullying and retaliation against those who report sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and evidence that investigations have been stalled and concealed where attempted, as discussed in the previous chapter (Harrington 2010, 156-57; Laville 2015).

Women as victims

Consistent with feminist criticisms of protection narratives in traditional security discourse (see Stiehm 1982) is the linguistic denial of women’s varied histories and experiences and the propensity to construct women as vulnerable and as victims within UN gender policy discourse (Hudson 2012a; von Braunmühl 2012; Puechguirbal 2010; also see MacKenzie 2010). Such rhetoric denotes a ‘victim narrative’ in that women are predominantly characterised as victims only. The victim narrative constructs women as victims of men’s violence against each other, which fosters insecurity (war), as well as men’s violence against women specifically. In the victim narrative, men have agency and engage in war whereas women lack agency and are victims of war. The victim narrative of women’s protection is a further gendering of women into passive roles and conversely men into active roles. The focus of this narrative tends to be on women’s experiences of sexual violence both in times of conflict and during post-conflict reconstruction.

The most frequently cited evidence of an essentialist understanding of women as victims of war is the increasing attention paid to sexual violence in conflict by Women, Peace and Security resolutions subsequent to Resolution 1325 (Barrow 2010; von Braunmühl 2012). Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) all pay special attention to sexual violence in conflict but say less about women’s empowerment or their existing contributions to both peace and conflict. Women, Peace and Security Resolution 2106 (2013) pays attention to accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, yet additionally notes that women’s political, social and economic empowerment – as well as recruiting boys and men in prevention programs – are essential to combatting sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Understanding that victimisation may occur in conflict, and acknowledging its occurrence and providing redress is certainly necessary, however it is problematic when the victimisation of women is the only way in which women achieve visibility (Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012). Fundamental to this critique is that in spotlighting sexual violence during and after conflict, women are constructed as disempowered victims with
limited or no agency, thus continuing their subordination and in turn undermining the empowerment mandate of international resolutions (Hudson 2012a; von Braunmühl 2012). Interestingly, there is no commensurate institutional discourse on the ways in which women are made vulnerable or potentially victimised by the intervention of a militarised peacekeeping force.

Cynthia Enloe (2004a, 104) suggests that in highlighting the propensity of commentators to emphasise women’s victimisation, the aim is not to “push women’s vulnerability back into the shadows.” Rather, it counters an “ungendered” view of the actors involved in conflict and provides space to acknowledge women’s varied and heterogeneous experiences. What the literature highlights then is that while women and men can be and are victims of violent conflict, they are not only victims. Essentially these concerns suggest that the protection mandate has come to be stressed far more strongly than empowerment, and that underlying this emphasis are gendered stereotypes which subordinate women to patriarchal protection (Hudson 2012a; Shepherd 2010, 73-74).

As with the above discussion, characterising women predominantly as victims and as vulnerable is part of the gendering impact of gender policy. The logic of women’s participation in peacekeeping missions and the relationship between this and women’s protection in post-conflict sites is explicit in Security Council Resolution 1888 (UNSC 2009a) where it welcomes:

…the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions, and recognising that women and children affected by armed conflict may feel more secure working with and reporting abuse to women in peacekeeping missions, and that the presence of women peacekeepers may encourage local women to participate in the national armed and security forces, thereby helping to build a security sector that is accessible and responsive to all, especially women.2

Recognising women’s differential victimisation when compared to men’s is important and should be on the international agenda. This is especially pertinent as historically it was the kinds of violence that women experienced which were ignored in traditional security perspectives or seen as an unavoidable consequence of men’s violence against each other, “collateral damage” (Brownmiller 1975). Increasing recognition of the sexual exploitation of women has been in part due to the activism among women’s transnational, regional and international networks.

2 See also Shepherd (2011) for analysis of Security Council Resolution 1888.
which framed violence against women fundamentally as a human rights issue; and in part a response to mass rapes in the Darfur and Congo conflicts (Bunch 1990; Keck & Sikkink 1998, 165-98). In addition, the international criminal tribunals that took place following the Rwandan and Yugoslav conflicts tried cases of mass rape and sexual torture as forms of genocide and crimes against humanity; both tribunals are seen as instrumental in the way that violence against women is tried in international law (Barrow 2010; Campbell 2007).

Victimisation does not represent the entirety of women’s experiences nor role in conflict and violence. Nor does its co-argument, that women are inherent and natural peacemakers, as it attaches inherent ‘feminine’ traits to women, an argument that is absurdly similar to those used to subordinate women and reinforce patriarchy. Therefore, while advocacy around sexual violence in conflict and getting justice for such crimes is necessary, the concern is that where the issue is narrowly focused on then this is to the detriment of characterising and viewing women as empowered and legitimate actors. Haeri and Puechguirbal (2010, 104) argue that the “remarkable capacity of...women to adapt to and survive the violence, loss, and deprivation which go hand in hand with war” is often overlooked while their vulnerability and victimhood is emphasised. In their discussion on violence against women in conflict, Rehn and Sirleaf (2002, 9) note that they “saw the scars, the pain and the humiliation” that violence and conflict had wrought on women; they continue:

And yet we saw something else as well. Time and again, we met women who had survived trauma and found the courage and the will to recommit to life. They were struggling to rebuild community and remake their lives (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, 9).

Marginalised as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘passive victims’ means that women’s potential is underutilised and that they “frequently achieve visibility only for their suffering, not for their actual and potential roles as sources, initiators and agents of both conflict and peace” (Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012, 3). Torunn Tryggestad (2010, 161-62) suggests that while both women’s equality and women’s protection have become internationally accepted norms, traditionally issues of women’s equality in decision making have been more contested than issues relating to women’s protection. Therefore, emphasising the ‘gendering’ of women and the presence of a ‘victim narrative’ speaks not only to limitations in the way that ‘gender’ in peacebuilding is conceptualised, but also suggests that such limitations exist as a manifestation of the marginalisation of women as decision makers.
Since its adoption in 2000, affirmations to Resolution 1325 appear in almost all Security Council resolutions establishing peacekeeping operations, generally in the form of “stressing a need for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed.” Where this is actually focused depends on the mission composition and what is judged to be the key features of any given post-conflict environment, as discussed in chapter three. In this regard, Renee Black (2009) has noted that while Resolution 1325 has impacted the language of country-specific Security Council resolutions, mission mandates are much more likely to call for women’s protection and are “significantly less likely to call for women’s active participation in decision-making.” The most recent resolution on Women, Peace and Security, Resolution 2122 (2013), is the first to focus almost entirely on women’s participation and empowerment since 2009.3

Importantly, as Kunz (2014, 7) notes, the gendered rhetoric of peacebuilding intersects with class and race as well as sex. Her analysis of gender in security sector reform (a key component of peacebuilding) highlights that women are cast as victims and the ‘feminine other’ of the masculine security sector which rests on essentialist notions of women as protected. Kunz (2014, 7) continues: “simultaneously, the woman victim is also the ‘other’ of the (Western or local elite) [gender and security sector reform] expert.” This notes the racialised aspects to the discourse as well, which have been highlighted in the discourse of international peacebuilding interventions more broadly, especially by those who view peacebuilding as an iteration of colonialism (see Razack 2004). Post-colonial authors have argued that raced hierarchies of power and the process of ‘othering’ have always permeated who is constructed as victim and who they are a victim of. Spivak’s (1988, 297) now well-known line in reference to the colonial abolition of sati – widow burning – captures the racial hierarchy she argues informed colonial interventions into women’s lives: that such interventions were part of the colonial discourse of the ‘other’, represented as “white men saving brown women from brown men.” In focusing on violence against women there has been a reinforced image of the woman as victim and the “Third World victim subject has come to represent the more victimized subject; that is, the real or authentic victim subject” (Kapur 2002, 2).

Essentially, the victim narrative is constitutive of not just gendered identities but also intersects with race and class hierarchies, reminiscent of the instrumentalist use of feminism rhetoric in

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3 There are other concerns with the way that women’s victimisation is conceived of in international resolutions and in implementation in post-conflict reconstruction, although not dealt with here. One is the emphasis some authors have placed on women’s role in perpetuating violence, rather than only being victim to it (Cohen 2013; Cohen & Nordås 2013, 2014; Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). Dara Kay Cohen (2013) has noted that the occurrence and perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence varies widely between conflicts. Although, as Lori Handrahan (2004) highlights, even where women comply with male systems of violence they do so under the prevailing condition of patriarchy.
colonial interventions (Kapur 2002; Hunt 2006). Yet in truth the continuing insecurity of women into post-war periods occurs across varied cultural contexts, meaning the subordination of women post-conflict is not specific to any particular socio-historical or political context (Pankhurst 2008a). Perhaps demonstrative of the gendering of women as victims being further delineated along existing hierarchies of power is the UN focus in post-2006 Timor-Leste on domestic violence while simultaneously downplaying the exploitative behaviours of peacekeepers. Therefore the following section focuses on the constitutive power of ‘gender’ in international peace mechanisms in the case of Timor-Leste with a particular focus on peacebuilding after the 2006 crisis period.

Conceptual limitations in practice in Timor-Leste

As the above section details, there are conceptual limitations to the UN’s application of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. These conceptual limitations have practical outcomes in the way that gender work is conceived of and in the policy approach of UN missions to gender issues. In analysis of the conceptual limitations of gender in UN peacebuilding, I posit that the discourse and praxis of gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding (as it relates to women’s empowerment and protection) is one dimensional. In identifying these conceptual limitations, it becomes apparent that a one dimensional understanding of gender in peace and conflict, and men’s and women’s experiences of peace and conflict, is not sufficient and has tangible outcomes in terms of implementation.

The operational effectiveness of gender work has frequently been called into question, which can relate to confusion or misunderstanding about what ‘gender’ relates to and what it actually means to ‘adopt a gender perspective’ on the ground (True 2013). Technical fixes that require a static, communicable framework that can be called ‘a gender perspective’ are limited in their capacity to fundamentally change relations between individuals and limit understanding of how these processes themselves are also gendered and gendering. The gendering functions outlined above shape the roles that men and women can undertake in post-conflict reconstruction. Taking a constructivist approach (see Shepherd 2010, 74-76), such gendering can perpetuate violence and discrimination through the continuing socialisation of normative gender conceptions, rather than advocating for broader socio-political transformation.4 Similarly, Navak and Suchland

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4 The use of ‘constructivist approach’ here follows Shepherd’s (2010, 74-75) definition of a constructivist theory of gender, in which it is understood that gendered behaviours are largely a product of socialisation; that is, they are “constructed through interaction with society and vary according to social and historical context.” Constructivism in International Relations has challenged rationalist theories, arguing that the human world is constructed through the actions of actors themselves, bringing to the fore the importance of agency and ideas (Kratochwil 2008, 86). Constructivism has had particular impact in critical security
(cited in Hudson 2012b, 89-90) outline a broader definition of gender based violence that incorporates “the acts and practices that systematically target a person, group or community in order to dictate what ‘men’ and ‘women’ are supposed to be.” Therefore this discussion is not only relevant to theorising about the conceptual limitations of gender in peacebuilding but is also connected with the outcomes of international policy in a specific context, shedding light on the actual outcomes for women of some gender policy.

**Victims: sexual and gender based violence**

The 2006 crisis period in Timor-Leste, or more explicitly the responses to it, exemplifies concerns regarding the conceptual limitations of gender mainstreaming and its application in post-conflict contexts. The crisis period can be summarised as the result of disintegrating security institutions in Timor-Leste: the national police force, PNTL (*Policia Nacional Timor-Leste*), and the national defence force, F-FDTL (*Falintil-Forças Armadas de Defesa de Timor-Leste*). Previously raised concerns over the stability and legitimacy of East Timorese security institutions established under UNTAET were apparently confirmed in the crisis period (see Rees 2003; Amnesty International 2003; Hood 2008). The 2006 crisis led to the establishment of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), the final UN peacebuilding mission in Timor-Leste, which closed in December 2012. UNMIT’s mandate centred on supporting national reconciliation, restoring public security until PNTL was reconstituted and to consolidate institutional development within PNTL (UNSC 2006a). UNMIT focused on security sector reform and capacity building within East Timorese security institutions. In essence, UNMIT was a police mission. The traditional security focus of this mission – both its methods and outcomes – continued the overwhelmingly militarised approach to peace and security in Timor-Leste by successive UN peacebuilding missions.

During the 2006 crisis, those engaged in public acts of violence included current and former defence force members, national police force members, members of the community ‘taking sides’ or using the opportunity to settle past grievances, and youth, who were often associated with martial arts gangs. While grievances within security institutions were a catalyst, the involvement of varied groups within the community highlighted the range of social tensions that were “uncorked” by the crisis (Scambary 2009). It is widely acknowledged that youth studies, suggesting as it does that ‘security’ can be socially constructed, offering the possibility of alternative readings of security (Agius 2012); however this debate sits outside the purview of this thesis. Both UNTAET and UNMISET were seen as inadequate regarding the formation of Timor-Leste’s security institutions: UNTAET for institutionalising resistance era tensions in security institutions and UNMISET for failing to address or redress UNTAET’s poor decisions; neither mission succeeded in building legitimate security institutions in Timor-Leste (Hood 2008, 61; Wilson 2013; Pushkina & Maier 2012, 330). These effects continued to be felt during UNMIT (Pushkina & Maier 2012).
disenfranchisement exacerbated the 2006 crisis in tandem with the high rates of unemployment and poverty (see Bowles & Chopra 2008; Diaz 2006; Niner 2011b; Scambary 2009). Members of Timor-Leste’s (mostly male) political elite were also accused of instigating and perpetuating violence for their own political gain: directly, by distributing weapons to supporters, and indirectly, by using inflammatory language during the crisis period. The crisis led to a number of deaths and significant property damage, mostly centred in the capital Dili (UN Special Commission 2006). There was however a much deeper impact on the broader community with approximately 150,000 people internally displaced, some to IDP camps on the outskirts of Dili and some moving out of Dili to the countryside (UN Special Commission 2006). Underlying tensions meant that the crisis was not merely short-term and political, but also had economic, social and historical dimensions (UNSC 2012b). By May 2006 it was apparent that Timor-Leste had “traversed the full spectrum between UN success story and failed state” (Scambary 2009, 266). While the ‘failed state’ label for Timor-Leste at the time is questionable, the crisis period nonetheless represents a period of instability and violence and led to a renewed peacekeeping presence in the country.6

The characterisation of the crisis, the depiction of it in national and international media and the formal response to it were decidedly male-centred. Anna Trembath and Damien Grenfell (2006) have argued that depictions of the crisis – such as in newspaper articles, images and in academic and institutional accounts – were predominantly of a masculinised urban domain in which men, both within and outside the security institutions, committed public acts of violence. They suggest that this is demonstrative of the way that men are most commonly identified as the dominant actors in nation forming, partly through their enactment of public acts of violence “in war and revolt”; they continue:

To a world watching via a globalised media, the images of clashes in the masculinised domain of the urban street and the gun battles by military and police serve to typify the kind of nation Timor-Leste is becoming: a violent and unpredictable place where women are shown only as victims or with their agency limited to their role as carers (Trembath & Grenfell 2006, 10).

Trembath and Grenfell (2006) go on to identify the activities that some women’s groups were engaging in outside of Dili during the crisis, highlighting both that the crisis was Dili-centred (and therefore not necessarily constitutive of a ‘failed state’) and that East Timorese women

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6 As other commentators have highlighted the conceptualisation of the ‘failed state’ is ambiguous and weak (Call 2008b, 2011) as well as imposing of a state-building framework “primarily driven by Western ideas of polity” (Nay 2013, 326).
maintained agency during the crisis. Aside from being depicted as victims only, Trembath and Grenfell (2006) and Niner (2011b) have highlighted the near complete absence of women in accounts and analysis of the crisis period. Sara Niner (2011b) argues that there was an overt focus on men and masculinity as both the drivers of and solutions to the conflict. Reports of this period tend to focus on male political leaders, instigators (such as those within the police and defence forces) and young men associated with martial arts gangs (UN Special Commission 2006; Kingsbury & Leach 2007, 5-11; Scambary 2009). This last group and its involvement in street violence, especially during the crisis period, has led to some analyses of masculinity in Timor-Leste, an essential yet “woefully under-analysed” area in international relations and security studies (Enloe 2004b; see also Pankhurst 2008c). These point especially to the disaffection of youth and the limited options available to young men in post-occupation Timor-Leste (see Myrttinen 2009, 2012; Scambary 2009; Niner 2009, 2011b).7

A gender unit was established as part of UNMIT and the starting up of the “UN machinery” again is associated with an increased “gender presence” in Timor-Leste, as described by one participant (Interview no. 12). UNMIT’s gender unit was mandated to take on a more supportive role when compared to security and police functions, supporting the existing UN agency programs in country and the development of a National Action Plan on gender based violence, rather than being a driver for these changes (UNSC 2006a). A number of people with whom I spoke characterised the 2006 crisis period in Timor-Leste as a ‘turning point.’ Most prominently the crisis was characterised as a turning point in the way that ‘gender issues’ were conceived of by international actors in Timor-Leste. This was in specific relation to the way in which UNMIT’s establishment and presence was associated with spotlighted attention to sexual and gender based violence, institutionally given the acronym SGBV. The increased attention to sexual and gender based violence was thanks in large part to the support of international organisations and their support for a variety of campaigns. One participant explained that sexual and gender based violence became a national focus point in the post-2006 period, largely driven by the international community which capitalised on existing domestic ground swell around the issue (Interview no. 15; see also Hall 2009).

Literature on the tendency to characterise women as victims, discussed above, points explicitly to fixation on violence against women and sexual and gender based violence as evidence of a

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7 The formation of martial arts gangs and the disaffection of young men in particular also has roots in tensions that exist between competing narratives of the resistance era (which women are also excluded from) and in particular existent generational divides. Essentially, younger East Timorese generations are frustrated that the political elite tend to downplay their role in the resistance, despite them often bearing the brunt of the military occupation through their clandestine activities (Leach 2009).
‘victim narrative’. In Timor-Leste, campaigns regarding sexual and gender based violence referred especially to sexual and domestic violence committed against women most particularly in the home. Women’s organisations had long been advocating around the issue of domestic violence, which appeared belatedly on previous UN agenda’s in Timor-Leste (Joshi 2005a, 2005b). In contrast to earlier periods of lethargy around the issue, this was a turning point. While the attention was certainly warranted, frustration was expressed regarding the “tunnel vision” that seemed to occur regarding sexual and gender based violence. In discussing her experience in Timor-Leste and elsewhere, a UN gender advisor stated:

I actually think that in places where this is debated, in donor organisations and all those places, they’re much more comfortable about giving money to the woman as victim, rather than the empowerment of women. Because, you know, there is a comfort zone around women as victims, there is no comfort zone around women who are empowered (Interview no. 28a).

The narrowing focus on sexual and gender based violence in Timor-Leste since 2006 arguably reflects international patterns of dominant victimisation discourses regarding Women, Peace and Security, discussed above. The above statement also notes the way in which sexual and gender based violence can appropriate a larger portion of funding, which has also occurred in Timor-Leste. As an example of increased attention to sexual and gender based violence in Timor-Leste from 2006, some participants explained how funding was directed towards those programs that contained the acronym SGBV, and that consequently ‘SGBV’ appeared in many funding applications (Interview no. 4; Interview no. 7; Interview no. 8). In many cases it appeared where the program dealt with the issue in only a superficial way. One advisor to a UN agency noted that SGBV was also frequently dealt with in isolation, and not well connected to related issues such as women’s economic empowerment or education (Interview no. 8). The appearance of SGBV in applications was therefore a way to ensure funding and was a way to show that ‘gender’ had indeed been incorporated as part of a program’s log frame (Interview no. 6).

Individuals did experience insecurity as a result of the 2006 crisis period in Timor-Leste, especially as a result of internal displacement, particularly in Dili. Yet perhaps as a counterpoint East Timorese participants noted the crisis period as a turning point also regarding the visibility of women’s heterogeneous roles in conflict resolution. These statements are a counterpoint to the institutional narrative of East Timorese women as victims of violence, patriarchy and their own culture. Such statements highlighted the ways in which the 2006 conflict created situations
in which some participants could see the gains made in terms of women’s equality in Timor-Leste since 1999. Given that the crisis was centred in Dili and the women who spoke of this turning point were well placed, urban women, this is not necessarily representative of the broader East Timorese population. Yet these women were well placed to engage in formal peace talks following the crisis and, as actors in national women’s organisations, were a resource that could have been drawn on.

The statements made on women’s role in the 2006 crisis during fieldwork were often characterised by a position of mediation and an ability to traverse the contours of the conflict. Women leaders encouraged meetings between factions to end hostilities and spoke to youth gangs to find out what they needed in peacetime in order to prevent further outbreaks of violence. Engaging youth in peacebuilding discussions was a key strategy for conflict resolution for some women’s groups in Dili (Interview no. 24). Some women’s groups, supported by the umbrella women’s secretariat Rede Feto, worked to rectify the insecurity experienced in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps which had sprung up as a result of the crisis (Interview no. 14). These groups formed committees in IDP camps to work on campaigns regarding domestic violence and trafficking, and played an important role in reducing violent incidences within IDP camps (Ferguson 2010). Excluding women from peacemaking activities like formal peace talks ignores their peacebuilding activities and the ways in which women already work towards stability despite challenges. UNMIT had an established gender unit so this was well placed to capitalise on women’s existing peacebuilding activities in Timor-Leste and connect these with high level dialogues.

Women were arguably seen as on the periphery of the crisis and were certainly not seen as actors in the violence. Gendered relations impact an individual’s experience of conflict and this issue was fundamental to the development of Resolution 1325. One participant, the director of a national women’s organisation, spoke at length about her insights and experience during the 2006 crisis period:

> For the violence usually we see that men make violence, but the impacts aren’t for men but for women and children, we can see in the crisis that all men find a place to be safe. But women they stay in the [IDP] camp, women and children were trying hard to get food, because men cannot go out because they feel threatened, it’s unsafe. But women would do everything, get fire wood, get water, get food, everything…When violence happened in the crisis, women were more mobilised. Because men…if they went out they say ‘oh,
maybe this person will see me and will hurt me or kill me’ but women no. We can say that when in the crisis or conflict, women are more brave because she is the one who is mobilised. I see [this] with my own eyes, because myself also, sometimes I say ‘ok my brother, just stay at home and then I can go out and get something.’ There was also a risk…but if they see men, they are more likely to carry out their intention to have conflict (Interview no. 24).

This participant was not the only person to speak of what they saw as the “protective role” that some women in Dili took on during the crisis (Interview no. 11). In 2006, members of the Popular Organisation of Timorese Women (OPMT) responded to a suggestion by Kirsty Sword Gusmão – former first lady of Timor-Leste – that women were only victims of men’s violence during the crisis, as they had been historically. They stated that it was a “simplistic depiction” of what was a “very complex and involved process for all us women” (OPMT 2006). Here we see the reluctance of some members of OPMT to be characterised only as victims with no reference to their social, political and economic differences and experiences. While the peacebuilding era has sidelined non-elite East Timorese women, those who have found space in the upper echelons continue to struggle to carve out a space in which to express a politicised voice. Characterising women as victims also continues the trend of women being encouraged to not see their work as political (see Charlesworth & Wood 2001, 338).

Resolution 1325 also calls for increased representation of women in peace negotiations and in decision making roles in peacebuilding missions – the empowerment mandate. Those who highlight increasing emphasis on protection and women’s victimisation suggest that this is at the cost to women’s empowerment (Hudson 2012a; Schnabel & Tabyshalieva 2012). This means that women’s victimisation is emphasised while conversely they continue to be marginalised as actors in post-conflict reconstruction and are not considered seriously as peace negotiators (Porter 2003, 248-51). This tension between the twin mandates of women’s empowerment and women’s protection was visible in the case study of Timor-Leste. According to UNMIT’s final SRSG, Ameerah Haq, women were almost entirely absent from high level dialogues to end violence in 2006 (Haq 2011). This reflects similar occurrences in 1999 where women struggled to engage in formal peace making processes leading up to and after the referendum, like the UN organised intra-East Timorese dialogues (see Rede Feto 2000a; Roynestad 2003, 3-4). This is also despite earlier attempts to establish women’s representation in political affairs throughout previous UN missions, which means women in decision making roles have been unable to capitalise on the structures put in place during UN administration.
Gendered: women in the security sector

The fact that women played such a small role in the 2006 conflict, both its causes and solutions, is illustrative of the reality that women continue to lack an influential role in security affairs in Timor-Leste (Niner 2013, 255). Therefore, while attention to issues of sexual and gender based violence in Timor-Leste was welcome, this focus was not balanced with empowering approaches to women’s inclusion in formal peace dialogues. Conceptions of women’s role in the security sector and of women’s collective security were limited to their victimisation as a result of sexual and gender based violence. Yet women did engage in community conciliation and peacebuilding tasks throughout the crisis. The traditional security preoccupation with men’s public violence and women as victims of violence in the home arguably limited UNMIT’s view, rendering the peacebuilding activities of these East Timorese women and their agency more broadly invisible to them.

As mentioned above, UNMIT was considered a police mission and its areas of work focused almost entirely on security sector reform in Timor-Leste. Moreover, post-conflict security sector reform is viewed as a key area of development to prevent sexual and gender based violence (Hudson 2012b, 88). Given the institutional focus of UNMIT and the salience given to security sector reform in combatting post-conflict sexual and gender based violence, the gender work of UNMIT centred on two key areas. First was to improve the representation of women in Timor-Leste’s police force. Second, and relatedly, was to improve the sensitivity and response of the police force to gender issues, namely, sexual and gender based violence. According to one UNMIT staff member, UNMIT’s gender unit focused on state security institutions, adding women to these institutions, and training for UN Police (UNPOL), PNTL and F-FDTL staff to respond to gender based violence (Interview no. 2).

Policing mandates have been increasingly incorporated into peacekeeping as the nature of interventions has expanded into multidimensional, complex missions. Consequently, civilian police units (UNPOL) have been added to the peacekeeping matrix, which in turn train national police forces in post-conflict settings. In Timor-Leste, UNMISET provided interim security and had executive control over policing functions until 2004. In 2006, the UN again took over executive policing under UNMIT, which was then handed back to the PNTL in 2012. A Vulnerable Person’s Unit (VPU) had been established within the PNTL under UNTAET to respond to domestic violence cases. UNMIT renewed support to the VPU. Timor-Leste’s Law

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8 The executive policing mandates in UNTAET and UNMISET, and also in the UN’s mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, represent the culmination of UNPOL’s specific increase in authority and the increased legitimacy of policing functions as integral to liberal peacebuilding (DPKO 2011).
Against Domestic Violence (LADV) contained a provision for a police unit to help investigate such cases and protect victims. Since the law’s adoption in 2010 the VPU has worked in this capacity as the dedicated police unit outlined in LADV (DPKO 2013). UNPOL advisors supported the VPU in developing its structural capacity, such as developing standard operating procedures, and in capacity building, such as training national police members (DPKO 2013). Under UNMIT, a Gender Advisor and Human Rights Advisor was installed in the office of the PNTL General Commander in July 2009 and a civilian advisor was hired to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout PNTLs policies and directives (DPKO 2013).

The recruitment and retention of women as peacekeepers and in national police forces has become an increasingly important approach to fulfilling the UN’s internal goals of gender balance in security sector reform. It is also frequently linked to the improved protection of women and girls in post-conflict situations. Including women in these traditionally masculine security sector terrains is a central approach of incorporating a gender perspective into UN peacebuilding. As described in a DPKO progress report, female peacekeepers not only improve the UN’s gender balance, but they can also carry out particular gendered tasks, such as:

…assisting female ex-combatants during the process of demobilising and reintegration into civilian life; widening the net of information gathering; performing cordon and search of women; interview survivors of gender based violence; assisting in the aftermath of sexual violence and mentoring female cadets at police and military academies (Gender Advisory Team 2010, 8).

Thus, women are included in peacebuilding and peacekeeping to take on particular (gendered) tasks, many of which pertain explicitly to the stated aims of gender mainstreaming and to the treatment of women in peacebuilding (Hudson 2012b, 90). Women’s participation as peacekeepers is also encouraged for the same reasons that women have historically been excluded from militaries; that is, that the justification of women’s involvement is on the basis of assumed stereotypical ‘feminine’ traits, especially as inherently peaceful (Carreiras 2010, 480; DeGroot 2001).

Despite these claims, representation of women in the police and military contingents of peacebuilding missions, especially at decision making levels, has remained poor. In March 2013, women accounted for three per cent of UN military personnel and approximately 9.7 per

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cent of UNPOL staff (Dharmapuri 2013, 1). Similar figures were reported in 2014.\textsuperscript{10} Moreover, the UN is unlikely to realise its own goals regarding women’s representation in peacekeeping as it is not fully implementing the twin approach of increasing women’s numbers in peacekeeping missions or incorporating a gender perspective into all areas of a missions work (Dharmapuri 2013, 1). In Timor-Leste, both UNTAET and UNMISET were noted as having limited female representation, particularly at higher levels or in decision making roles (Ospina 2006a, 28-29). Representation of women in military and police contingents was also low in each mission in Timor-Leste, and this was perceived by participants; for example, the director of one national women’s organisation stated:

From our point of view [UNPOL] was mostly men…So that’s why we, we tried asking them…but at least we have [some] women in UNPOL in Timor-Leste that we can see they are helping…Not many though, not many women (Interview no. 24).

Annika Björkdahl (2008) draws on norm promotion theories in her discussion of how the UN’s mission to Kosovo, UNMIK, attempted to institute liberal democratic norms while failing to hold themselves accountable to the same standards: that is, failing to “practice what they preach.” Especially problematic about this is that practice is in itself a means of norm promotion. As Björkdahl (2008, 154) describes, “one particularly useful way of diffusing norms is to lead by example.” That women numbered so few in different sectors of UN staff – for example, of the small number of East Timorese employed by UNTAET only six per cent were women (Schmaedick 2001) – would suggest that the UN was failing its own gender-balancing goals, which are fundamental to the empowerment mandate. Although Björkdahl’s (2008) analysis is in relation to UNMIK’s governance structures and their relationship with political institutions in Kosovo, her framework is useful here when considering the relationship between UNPOL and PNTL. One participant noted that the low numbers of women in the police and military UN contingents meant that peacebuilding missions in Timor-Leste were failing to live up to their own set standards:

It makes sense that UNPOL supported women…They can take the position as the commander in the [police] unit. Like today in Liquica the District Commander is a woman, so it means that what we expect about gender is already implemented, even though not in every district, but this is one [example]…[But] women in UNPOL…OK, I can say not many. So UN is

\textsuperscript{10} Figure sourced from: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/womeninpk.shtml
asking about gender, gender should be equal, but sometimes they are not also
taking consideration that the presence…like in the forces, UNPOL, ok there
are some women, but in the military [peacekeeping forces] it is very few,
military forces it is very few (Interview no. 25).

While UNPOL encouraged women’s representation in PNTL it designated this engagement in a
particularly gendered way; for example, women were especially represented in the VPU. The
unit was an important step in making security institutions more responsive to the security needs
of both women and children in Timor-Leste, especially as issues of domestic violence and
sexual violence had previously been inadequately dealt with. Yet where women’s inclusion or
incorporation into peacebuilding is limited to only these ‘gendered’ tasks, they continue to work
on the periphery of mainstream peace and security processes. As one participant who had
worked with UNPOL from UNTAET through to UNMIT explained:

UNPOL, they treat [men and women] the same, equal. But mostly they
encourage women to learn like computers, the communication system…the
gender focal point in PNTL, of course it is a woman; VPU, of course it’s a
woman (Interview no. 25).

Another participant also noted that “usually for security [issues, it is] usually men, but in
working closely with the community, [it is usually] women” (Interview no. 24). These
approaches to gender inclusivity perpetuate normative gender conceptions that have historically
seen women as subordinated and excluded from priority issues of politics, economics and ‘hard’
military security. Moreover, the approaches are consistent with Sandra Harding’s (1986, 17-
18) definition of gendered activity, in that they “divide necessary…activities between different
groups of humans” based on perceived gender dualisms. During UNTAET, the small amount of
East Timorese women employed with the mission were included as consultants in areas such as
health care and education: “women for the most part have been excluded from discussions
concerning politics, economics, national security and other such typically ‘male’ arenas” (Ajiza

In addition, such examples are further demonstrative that gender work is women’s work and
gender pertains solely to women. While the UN, and in this case UNPOL, encouraged gender
mainstreaming, they perpetuated an understanding of particular gendered roles for women. This

11 Jacqueline Siapno (2008) has reported that gender sensitivity within PNTL remains poor, particularly
noting sexual harassment within PNTL and the existence of ‘glass ceilings’ for women within Timor-
Leste’s security sector.
is particularly evident given that women’s work appears to be concentrated in tasks related to gender and in relation to women, and these are not as highly regarded as other core security functions. As Heidi Hudson (2012b, 90) highlights, such essentialist understandings of gender equality fail to take account of a:

…hyper-masculinist and militarist culture in the security sector, or of the possibility that through integration in the military women may adopt those very same traits. On the other hand, agency may become a buzzword masking very specific one-dimensional roles…Women cannot be regarded as agents simply because they provide key security services.

Ultimately, as Puechguirbal and Haeri (2010, 104) argue, the characterisation of women as victims who lack agency, and who are subsequently sidelined from decision making and security roles, means that decisions regarding women’s security and their access to material resources continue to be made by men. In Timor-Leste, spotlighted attention to sexual and gender based violence from 2006 arguably reflected broader international patterns that saw the same issues dominate UN resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The victim narrative is part of a ‘gendering’ process occurring in UN peacebuilding missions, which means there is ingrained within UN peacebuilding a gendered discourse that pertains to women, outlining and shaping the way peacebuilding missions view and value women’s contributions. Moreover, drawing on post-colonial perspectives illustrates why even with increased attention to sexual and gender based violence the actions of peacekeepers in this area were considered outside of the SGBV framework, instead falling to limited internal investigations and inadequate justice responses.

The examination presented in this chapter suggests that acknowledging the varied and heterogeneous roles and experiences of both women and men in conflict and peacebuilding is better able to support both the empowerment and protection mandates. This would entail broader consideration of how gender intersects with other socially and politically constructed identities, as well as institutional analysis on how ‘gender’ is conceptualised within peacebuilding practice. In turn this would allow for recognition that different conceptualisations of gender impact the policy approaches that are undertaken (Eveline & Bacchi 2005, 508). The tension between empowerment and protection, the gendering of women and women’s work, technical fixes to complex problems and the performative aspect of training and evaluation all serve to undermine an outcome of transformed gender relations.
Conclusion

Gendering occurs despite the inclusion of a gender rhetoric within peacebuilding and indeed the liberal additive approach to women in peacebuilding appears to perpetuate the ‘gendering’ process. Women are added to peacebuilding to fulfil ‘gender’ requirements and in turn come to embody the gender components of liberal peacebuilding. Evidence of this ‘gendering’ process arguably undermines the notion that women can be empowered by UN peacebuilding programs. While it is positive that the UN has recognised that women have historically played a limited role in their peacebuilding and peacekeeping endeavours and have sought to rectify this issue, including women in peacebuilding based on gendered assumptions about their experiences and capacities does nothing to restructure hierarchical gender relations that underpin gendered inequality. In Timor-Leste, women continued to be excluded from peace negotiations in 2006, as they were after 1999. In essence, ‘gendering’ reinforces particular gendered identities regarding what women can do in peacebuilding.

Although the adoption of Resolution 1325 was an essential development and watershed moment for women and gender in peacebuilding, there remain conceptual and practical limitations in the UN’s implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in peacebuilding missions. This chapter argued that, in incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding, women are ‘gendered’ and proscribed certain roles in peacebuilding missions, frequently characterised as victims, and achieving visibility in only limited ways and with limited agency. Given the gendering functions of these conceptual limitations, the chapter emphasised the constitutive capabilities of policy approaches to women, gender and peacebuilding – meaning the ways they reproduce gendered subjects. Importantly though, in examining the perspectives of East Timorese participants, the chapter demonstrated their agency and that East Timorese participants did not conceive of women as victims. Conversely, women during the 2006 crisis period where characterised as ‘brave’. Following this examination of peacebuildings gendering function, the following chapter examines more closely what role East Timorese women’s organisations played in the implementation of a gender perspective in Timor-Leste and what this meant for their advocacy. The chapter argues that the role of national level women’s organisations in negotiating around gendered identities should not be overlooked.
7: Women’s organisations and UN peacebuilding: resistance and agency

This chapter examines the relationship between the successive UN missions in Timor-Leste and the national women’s organisations who acted as vehicles for implementation of gender policies. In particular it examines how centralised urban-focused peacebuilding in Timor-Leste impacted on national women’s organisations and their work. Whereas the previous chapter examined conceptual limitations in the UN’s approach to gender, especially highlighting limitations in the technical, bureaucratic approaches, this chapter examines resistance to international gender norms in Timor-Leste. The chapter looks specifically at the resistance faced by national women’s organisations as they tried to implement gender policy and how this resistance was in part shaped by the presence of centralised peacebuilding missions. The analysis in this chapter argues that partnering with UN missions can have potentially destabilising effects for women’s activism in post-conflict settings.¹ To overcome potential destabilisation, women’s organisations aimed to identify the synergies between women’s activism pre-peacebuilding and UN gender mainstreaming practice post-occupation. The focus here is on national women’s organisations because these were the organisations used to deliver the UN’s gender policies in country during its peacebuilding missions. This reflects the increasing utilisation of civil society partners in peacebuilding to legitimise peacebuilding activities ‘on the ground.’

The chapter begins by outlining the historical relationship between UN peacebuilding missions and domestic civil society organisations. In seeking to employ civil society as an essential part of its peacebuilding practices, the UN has increasingly partnered with domestic women’s organisations, utilising them to help socialise their particular conceptualisations of gender. The focus here is on what this partnering has meant for women’s activism in domestic settings. As part of utilising local organisations, the UN also provides training to facilitate socialisation of international norms, which is considered by some indicative of the coercive aspects of peacebuilding (Belloni 2008) and the performative aspects of gender (Marchand 2009). The chapter then examines the resistance faced by women’s organisations that partnered with the UN missions in Timor-Leste, which was characterised by the view that ‘gender’ represented a ‘western’, imported culture that would undermine ‘traditional’ East Timorese culture. This result is in part related to the UN’s centralised operations as well as its decreasing legitimacy in Timor-Leste over time. In the face of resistance and claims that gender equality was inconsistent with East Timorese culture, processes of negotiation regarding gender norms have taken place.

National women’s organisations find themselves at the coalface of such negotiations, consistent with Henrizi’s (2015) suggestion that although NGOs can be considered ‘local’, they also work in a space that has been heavily imbued with international engagement.

The role of civil society in liberal peacebuilding

In 2000, then UN Secretary General Kofi Anan expounded the role of civil society in “articulating and defending” global norms and called for the UN to open itself further to civil society expertise (Anan 2000, 69). After establishing a Panel of Eminent Persons to report on UN-civil society relations, Anan wrote that he was “convinced that it would be of benefit to the Organization…to find ways to consult more regularly with civil society” (UNGA 2004, 2). The resultant report, *We the peoples: Civil society, the United Nations and global governance* (UNGA 2004), hereafter the ‘Cardoso Report’, noted that global good governance “was no longer the sole domain of governments” and that to be effective the UN would have to reach beyond governments to civil society counterparts. Building and strengthening civil society has therefore become an important aspect of post-conflict peacebuilding, supporting objectives relating to both democratisation and community empowerment (Belloni 2008). In 2012, the Security Council reaffirmed its commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda by calling on the international community to give women’s civil society organisations a prominent role in peacemaking, in the planning and implementation of peace agreements, and in post-conflict reconstruction (UN News Centre 2012).

Civil society organisations have long held a place as implementers of development programs. With an increasingly connected relationship between development and security goals – fundamental to the expansion of the liberal peace paradigm – these same organisations have unsurprisingly come to play a key role in post-conflict peacebuilding and instituting security (see Duffield 2001, 22-42; Chandler 2007). Oliver Richmond (2009a, 150) has argued that the notion of a ‘civil peace’ dominates the liberal peacebuilding consensus and, consequently, “where peacebuilding occurs, it is widely accepted that it must both create and promote a vibrant civil society.” Fostering a civil society in post-conflict contexts then is considered a legitimate mechanism of building peace, an accepted norm in the peacebuilding toolbox. Conversely, a well-functioning civil society acts as a “crucial validation of liberal peacebuilding strategies and objectives” (Richmond 2009a, 15). Therefore civil society has not only become important to the conceptualisation of the liberal peace, it is also expected that civil society actors will support and legitimise UN peacebuilding activities on the ground to host populations.
There are however problematic assumptions inherent in this mechanism. Most relevant for this chapter is the way in which ‘the local’ is conceptualised as a homogenous and uncontested space which can be empowered and co-opted by ‘the international’ to further their own goals (Richmond 2009a; MacGinty 2008). Interveners often lack an understanding of diversity at the ‘local’ level and within civil society (Pouligny 2005). This problematises the concept that local actors or civil society can, firstly, be representative of the broader community, and secondly, that these actors can legitimise peacebuilding policy as representatives. As Richmond (2009a, 150) explains:

The concept of civil society is mainly used to represent a Western view of non-governmental actors, citizens, individuals, subjects, workers, consumers and institutions which are empowered from above and outside to represent themselves, exercise their own agency, lobby and advocacy within the confines of political liberalism.

Ostensibly, the UN posits its partnering with domestic local civil society organisations in peacebuilding as a means to empower local actors and to ‘localise’ and respect local history and knowledge. Yet as Belloni (2008) points out, the very act of engaging local civil society actors rests on the premise that there are local needs that can be met through international funding funneled through domestic NGOs, a premise which disparages the existence of local knowledge and resources. As discussed in chapter two, the practice of peacebuilding to some extent rests on the infantilisation of recipients who are the ‘target’ population of interventions (Bush & Duggan 2014, 3010; Hughes 2009a, 2009b). Consistent with this critical perspective, Cecilia Brunnstrom (2003) argues that domestic NGOs can experience the influx of international agencies “as an invasion that threatens local control over the development process.” This is a frequent complaint: the top-down western modelled implementation processes. As Roger MacGinty (2008) explains, rather than create space for indigenous forms of peacemaking the process is more likely to lead to their co-option by western methods. Although some international donors have recognised the limitations inherent in this approach, such recognition has not translated easily into changing practices.

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2 Another concern, which is outside the purview of this thesis, is the questions raised about notions of legitimacy, sovereignty and democracy in international interventions and their use of civil society partners. B.S. Chimni (2004, 3) examines the role of international institutions in forming a “global imperialist state.” As domestic actors, NGOs within states decentralise international instruments of global governance, overcoming the issue of state sovereignty “from the inside” (Chimni 2004, 3). National NGOs implement the programs of international institutions, actors that are unaccountable to the population, and conversely national NGOs become increasingly accountable to their donors rather than their communities (Belloni 2008).
These general concerns regarding the way in which national NGOs and international institutions are partnered are also relevant to partnerships with women’s organisations, but there are additional concerns relating to how such partnering can impact on women’s collective activism in different contexts. Engaging with and supporting women’s organisations in host countries is a key aspect of the UN’s approach to incorporating a gender perspective into its peace operations and in Timor-Leste, how the UN and its agencies engaged with the existing women’s movement is fundamentally about the process of engagement with national women’s organisations. Resolution 1325 calls for “measures that support local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution” and “expresses the willingness” of the Security Council to consult with local women’s organisations (as well as international organisations). Engaging women’s organisations via UN peacebuilding therefore appears as a mechanism to support gender inclusive peacebuilding, as a means of improving women’s empowerment and protection in host countries, and as a means of promoting a more substantive peace. That is, there is an instrumentalist aspect to the UN’s partnership with national women’s organisations. Security Council Resolution 1888 states:

Recognizing that the promotion and empowerment of women and that support for women’s organizations and networks are essential in the consolidation of peace to promote the equal and full participation of women and encouraging Member States, donors, and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to provide support in this respect (UNSC 2009a).

From the outset of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste there was a relationship between successive missions and national Dili-based women’s organisations. As chapter three outlined, women’s organisations were forming in Timor-Leste during Indonesian occupation and these same groups continued their activism post-occupation, such as through the running of the National Women’s Congress, establishing their priorities in the resultant Platform for Action. Supporting such organisations can ensure that the UN, in their peacebuilding efforts, bolsters the work of women’s groups already undertaken as well as take seriously their concerns in post-conflict reconstruction – a fundamental aspect of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In chapter four though it was noted that in partnering with women’s organisations the UN more readily empowered centrally based middle class cohorts who were not representative of the entirety of the East Timorese population. This was in part due to the centralisation of the mission and in part due to their preference of working with apolitical organisations as compared to entities considered overtly political or radical. Despite the rhetoric of supporting existing
indigenous and local organisations and initiatives, there is clearly an ideological tilt to the choices of whom the UN supports. In turn, the instrumentalist use of women’s organisations is a mechanism that will shape the activities of such organisations. This is not to say that women’s activism in Timor-Leste only exists in the form of NGOs, but rather this was the principal, if not only, way in which activists were able to secure funding from donors and thus engage with the UN peacebuilding missions. As this chapter examines, in working with the UN national East Timorese women’s organisations faced resistance to their work, challenging the assumption that domestic civil society partners will be able to legitimise international norms on the ground. Furthermore, the resistance faced by these organisations can also in part be understood as fomented by the UN’s presence. In detailing this argument, this chapter draws on post-colonial perspectives and highlights the centralisation of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

**Training**

Before examination of the resistance faced by East Timorese women’s organisations though, this section details more explicitly the training of local partners in peacebuilding missions. This in turn can speak to broader post-colonial and critical perspectives that examine the way peacebuilding praxis demands conformity to a particular mode of state governance. Thus ‘training’ has broader connotations relating to the ‘training’ of disorderly populations into a particular style of liberal governance, consistent with world order (Darby 2009; Pugh 2004; Hughes 2009a; Jabri 2013; MacGinty 2008). The UN employs and trains ‘experts’ who then act as agents in globalising a particular mode of governance (Väyrynen 2004, 131). In peacebuilding missions, experts are sent to conflict or post-conflict countries – experts in security, governance, economic reconstruction, gender or development for example – who then define what is needed to conform to a particular model of representative democracy. The expertise is then passed to local counterparts, local organisations and civil society counterparts, who socialise the frameworks at a ‘local’ level. Importantly though, this does not mean that local counterparts are simply subject to and absorb uncritically donor advice, but they also demonstrate agency, as will be discussed below in regards to East Timorese women’s organisations negotiating around the meaning and principles of gender in Timor-Leste.

Part of international engagement with local organisations, governments and ministries includes a process of ‘training’ local representatives in international norms. Gender mainstreaming, for example, often involves the training of government representatives who can in turn mainstream gender throughout their ministries, as explained by one participant (Interview no. 2). Training dictates how organisations and populations can be held accountable, can monitor themselves and how others evaluate their conduct, as well as legitimising the good governance of the UN
Gender is but one area in which communities are continually evaluated, along with other issue areas such as health and education (Hughes 2009a, 53). In her account of gender mainstreaming in the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation, Lynne Phillips (2005, 652) notes how gender mainstreaming is a subtle process that “draws diverse populations into new forms of self-evaluation and performance.” Through training, preferred knowledge is imparted, which can occur in part because of power differentials between trainers and trainees, which in turn leads to self-evaluation and performance.

In gender work then there is a process of imparting a particular knowledge framework, a process that inherently involves power. In his extensive work on power, knowledge and discourse, Michel Foucault (1970, 1972) argues that it is through knowledge that power is exercised, with power and knowledge integrally linked in a mutually constitutive relationship. It is power that constitutes differential value given to different or opposing knowledge, and discourse or “discursive formations” are ways of constituting knowledge (Foucault 1972). Implied in the system of training and evaluation embodied within international peace operations is a hierarchical framework of knowledge. The knowledge of international actors is considered superior and objective and can thus be imparted into any given context: the international realm is considered a “domain of peace that owns the necessary knowledge to ‘develop’ domestic [post-conflict] societies” (Shepherd 2008, 166). This is in contrast to local, subjective knowledge that is muddied by contextual factors. Thus peacebuilding discourse and praxis is constitutive of both ‘the local’ – the domain of intervention and site of behaviour change – and ‘the international’ – who are the “imperfect but necessary regulator of world order” (Heathershaw 2008b, 329; see also Jabri 2013). Peacekeeping itself has been framed in Foucauldian perspectives as an activity in regulation, training and reformation of ‘abnormal’ states and their institutions (Zanotti 2006; Reeves 2012).

During this research, a number of participants noted that they felt their knowledge was not valued by international actors, especially knowledge gained through participating in the resistance, for example: “Everyone already has knowledge and we have to develop that…Everyone has experience working in the clandestine time, in a different way” (Interview no. 3). One participant explicitly linked this with the training programs of UN peacebuilding and the preference to use international trainers:

Another challenge is in the training. The UN always brings some people from outside [of Timor-Leste] and actually they do not know about all the gender issues in Timor-Leste…And one example is the training for administrators, the
UN brought a person from New York, so they spent a lot of money on that. But I think that the material or subject they were teaching in the training is just the same. Based on [the NGO’s] experience, we had people here that could also have provided that training. But instead, [the] UN brings new people from overseas to provide this training. So they spend a lot of money on accommodation and an interpreter and translating (Interview no. 18).

As part of the instrumental use of civil society organisations in peacebuilding, training is conducted with local organisations to ‘build capacity’ and to socialise the mechanisms used by large international donors to smaller national partners. Post-independence in Timor-Leste, UN peacebuilding focused heavily on institutional capacity building in order to eventually withdraw from the country. Following the 2006 crisis period, UNMIT again focused heavily on capacity building, especially within Timor-Leste’s security institutions and within government (UN Security Council 2012c). As one participant explained, ‘capacity building’ was fundamental to the transition plan of UNMIT (Interview no. 4). This was also true in terms of gender mainstreaming, where the focus shifted to building capacity in these areas, within the government and within the security sector (Interview no. 4). UNMIT’s gender unit was involved in training staff in the PNTL, F-FDTL and in UNPOL. To facilitate the planned end of UNMIT, one staff member explained that UNMIT trained East Timorese staff in order for them to in turn have the capacity to then conduct training of other groups (Interview no. 2).

In essence, there are complex processes of training and evaluation involved in incorporating a gender perspective into UN peacebuilding. Key actors in local populations are trained in the discursive and practical aspects of gender mainstreaming, who in turn conduct workshops and trainings with local populations to pass on the framework. The process was explained by the director of one national civil society partner organisation to UNMIT:

I worked with UNMIT in 2009, by having ‘training of trainer’ training [ToT]. So after the training, UNMIT provided the model to the facilitators [in the national NGO] and then [the facilitators] go to the field, or the village and they will use this training kit to give the training to the community. In the training they talk about what is violence, what is gender and so on. We did not receive funds, just the training (Interview no. 16).

The training of national organisations also partly explains why broader internationally defined issue areas come to dominate the agenda in domestic contexts during peacebuilding missions.
For example, during UNTAET “a critical step during [the transitional period] was the promotion of women in the political, electoral and constitutional processes” (Ospina 2006a, 10), which explicitly reflects both the language of Resolution 1325 and the primary goals of UNTAET. During UNMISET, the gender unit supported the newly created Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) and the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) within the national police force as the mission’s focus was on supporting the first independent government and maintaining law and order (Ospina 2006a, 10-11; Whittington 2002, 11). My interviews conducted during UNMIT elicited responses on the more recent concept of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).3 UNMIT’s gender unit was involved in the signing of an agreement between government, civil society and parliament to implement GRB (Interview no. 2). Called the ‘Dili Declaration’, it was signed during International Women’s Day celebrations in March 2008 (Costa, Sawer & Sharp 2013, 340). The adoption of GRB in Timor-Leste “drew strongly on rationales circulating within the international community” (Costa, Sawer & Sharp 2013, 340).4 GRB then was knowledge that was imparted to the domestic population, as one participant explained:

There is no big difference between [UN] missions regarding gender, but actually there are some problems with UNMIT. For example GRB, that is a new thing, so we are learning (Interview no. 18).

When UNTAET’s gender unit first began partnering with Rede Feto and other Dili-based women’s organisations, training was conducted on how to write reports and financial administration. Local civil society organisations would have needed such skill sets in order to receive funds and engage with UN peacebuilders. While such training is pragmatic, it does not increase the effectiveness or impact of local activism (Belloni 2008, 203).

**Post-colonial perspectives**

Conceptual and practical limitations to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda were emphasised in the previous chapter. In addition to these limitations there are domestic factors that can constrain the actual and potential outcomes of gender work in UN

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3 As Costa, Sawer and Sharp (2013, 339-40) explain: “GRB has emerged internationally as a strategy for promoting gender equality by paying attention to the raising and spending of government finances. It involves analyses of the gender-differentiated impacts of government budgets and changes in budgetary decision-making processes and priorities.”

4 As Costa, Sawer and Sharp (2013, 341) note however – and what has been argued elsewhere in this thesis – East Timorese women were also advocating for this development, in this case especially the women’s caucus in parliament were vocal supporters, who saw it as “a way to fulfil their gender equality mandate.”
peacebuilding. Such factors include national governance structures, the nature of domestic civil society and normative gender conceptions at the local level, all of which shape the adaptation of international gender norms in a domestic context (Hall & True 2009; Corcoran-Nantes 2009). These factors are fluid and change over time. In norm diffusion theories, national civil society organisations play a key role in advocating at both national and international levels to institute human rights change in the domestic political realm, particularly advocating through transnational advocacy networks (Risse & Sikkink 1999; Keck & Sikkink 1998). Much of the literature on norm diffusion focuses on the transfer of norms from international spaces to domestic locales, although the role of domestic actors in this is also acknowledged (Checkel 1997; Alldén 2010). As Levitt and Merry (2009) point out, it is domestic actors such as national civil society organisations that are often tasked with promoting and adapting such norms, a process that can provoke national resistance and dismissal directed towards these organisations.

Similarly, in peacebuilding endeavours Richmond (2012, 117) notes the colonial propensities in such interventions which are apparent to local populations. Phillip Darby (2009) argues that peacekeeping is “cast in the mould” of colonialism, an argument he grounds in drawing similarities between the international context of colonialism and peacekeeping: “Action is determined from ‘above’ and outside. First World knowledge is valorized…The problems to be tackled are ‘out there’” (Darby 2009, 701). Anne Orford (2003, 11) has argued that the way in which international law has portrayed the need to intervene “in order to protect…the people of ‘failed states’…[seems] to rehearse colonial fantasies about the need for benevolent tutelage of uncivilised people.” Likewise, Michael Pugh (2004) labels contemporary peacekeeping as “riot control” in that it responds to what he characterises as, ultimately, resistance to the prevailing hierarchical world order. Peacekeeping, he argues, responds to manifestations of instability that are a result of a hegemonic world system, instability that reflects the inherent inequity of this system and its failure to benefit large portions of the world. Laura Zanotti (2006) suggests that peacekeeping attempts to “maintain order by normalizing the international arena” through disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms. Post-colonial scholars such as Darby and Pugh draw links between contemporary peace support operations and colonialism in this way; that is, that they both supported the interests of the powerful who were acting in their own interests although often justifying interventions on humanitarian grounds or in the interests of the lives of those they were intervening in.

In the international arena, resistance to the implementation of gender norms is most often characterised as attached to the domestic locale. In her ethnographic research on the international human rights system and its approach to violence against women, Sally Merry
(2003) found that in international discourse it is traditional cultures that are generally characterised as barriers to progress. For example, documents such as Resolution 1325 (and subsequent Women, Peace and Security resolutions) focus their attentions on post-conflict states “articulated in association with predicates such as ‘local’ and indigenous” (Shepherd 2008, 165). This is opposed to understandings that see international actors themselves as promoting particular hetero-normative gender conceptions. Moreover, more critical perspectives highlight how understanding resistance as solely located in and emanating from patriarchal domestic structures as consistent with colonial civilising rhetoric. As Nicola Pratt and Sophie Richter-Devroe (2011, 496) explain:

There is a risk that conflict and peacebuilding analysis and practice fall victim to neo-colonial, civilizationary stances claiming the need to liberate women in other parts of the world from – what are often dubbed ‘cultural’ or ‘traditional’ – gender-discriminatory norms and practices.

This reflects limitations in liberal peacebuilding approaches highlighted in critical peacebuilding literature. When there are local failures regarding the implementation of liberal peace principles, the international community tends to blame local actors and political elites; in essence dysfunction is attributed to local failures (Richmond 2012, 116-17; Hughes 2009a). The international promotion of gender equality makes universal claims challenging historically or traditionally condoned behaviours that discriminate, subordinate or are violent towards women. The UN Office for the Coordination of Human Rights (OCHR) uses the term ‘harmful traditional practices’ to refer to such practices. However, as Winter, Thompson and Jeffreys (2002) point out, the focus tends to be on non-western societies which:

…gives the impression that the metropolitan centres of the West contain no ‘traditions’ or ‘culture’ harmful to women, and that the violence which does exist there is idiosyncratic and individualized rather than culturally condoned.

Critics argue that such a formulation paints all third world women as victims not only of men and of patriarchy, but more broadly as victims of ‘culture’ (Kapur 2002). Non-indigenous women also face discrimination but do not have the additional subjugation inherent in an individual’s indigeneity. In attempts to find the universal nature of women’s oppression and of patriarchy, gender oppression is “subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential, non-western
barbarism” (Butler 2006, 5). Radhika Coomaraswamy (2002, 484-85) connects the denigration of the cultural ‘other’ to the historical legacy of colonialism, in which attention was focused on certain cultural practices that discriminated against women in order to “denigrate the third world ‘other.’” Such claims ‘moralised’ the colonial project and western feminism was “redirected outward” to focus on abuses of “Other women by Other men, instead of on patriarchal societies” (Hunt 2006, 54). Elements of western feminism are therefore implicated in historical colonial and imperialist interventions. I suggest here that consideration of this factor is important in understanding resistance to gender norms in the context of international peacebuilding interventions.

Feminist discourse and activism was then historically linked to the colonial project and was utilised in support of colonial interventions. As discussed in the previous chapter, colonial interventions partly rested on gendered narratives of colonial men ‘saving’ women from colonised men, and this same discourse is evident in contemporary war-making (Spivak 1988, 297; Hunt 2006; Shepherd 2006). Krista Hunt (2006) has used the term “embedded feminism” in analysing the use of feminist discourse in explaining the need for international interventions in particular cases, projects that often ultimately subvert feminist goals. Embedded feminism, Hunt (2006) argues, was historically visible in colonialist projects, but continues today as part of a justifying rhetoric. As a consequence of the historical legacy of colonialism and the feminist projects embedded within it, movements for women’s international human rights in the third world are frequently viewed as a “secret weapon” of western imperialism (Coomaraswamy 2002, 487).

In peacebuilding, gender work is framed as a way to combat traditional gender conceptions that may discriminate against women. The immediate post-war moment is further characterised as the moment in which women’s activists can and should start working towards improved gender equality; essentially, post-conflict is presented as an opportunity to restructure domestic normative gender conceptions, especially in the context of international interventions (True 2013). In post-conflict societies any problems can be ascribed to local disorder rather than to issues with international policy (Hughes 2009b). This ignores the gender conceptions that UN peace operations themselves purport, examined in the previous chapter. Certainly post-conflict reconstruction can provide opportunities to empower women and improve gender equality, as do periods of conflict itself (True 2013; Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001). Yet when the push to

5 Conversely, Parashar (2012) argues against the development among feminists to be reluctant to criticise cultural practices that are violent towards women, or traditions that legitimise violence against women, for fear of being labelled inherently racist. This is a valid point to make, and it is not my intention to argue for a purely culturally relativist approach.
engender improved gender equality is perceived as emanating solely from international actors with little recognition of local context – when packaged with top-heavy, centralised peacebuilding missions – this can provoke resistance. As Coomaraswamy (2002, 487) notes, international interventions aimed at improving women’s rights must recognise that resistance on the basis that the intervention is perceived as western imperialism or paternalism is inevitable.

**Resistance to the work of women’s organisations**

Research conducted in Timor-Leste saw culture characterised as a barrier to progress in terms of gender equality, confronting successive UN missions with complex hurdles. In particular East Timorese culture was explicitly positioned in binary opposition to a modern accomplishment of improved gender equality in Timor-Leste. I use the word culture as it reflects the language that emerged from participant interviews. The word culture can be ambiguous with a multitude of definitions and meanings. Here it refers to the symbolic and learned aspects of human society that covers a range of actions and meanings, such as language, custom and tradition. As Rubinstein (2005, 528-29) describes, culture refers to the “meaningful patterned activities” that emerge from interactive processes among individuals, communities and their environments. East Timorese cultures, and patriarchal norms within them, were characterised by a number of participants as the biggest obstacle to institutionalising and internalising gender equality in Timor-Leste. The patriarchy of East Timorese culture was framed as all-encompassing and universal throughout Timor-Leste regardless of geography or socio-economic position and despite the heterogeneous nature of East Timorese customs and belief systems (see Hicks 2007; McWilliam & Traube 2011; Niner 2013). In these formulations, all East Timorese women were assumed to be subjected to patriarchy in the same way and to the same degree. One participant spoke out against this perception, as well as noting that discrimination and violence against women occurs globally:

I can remember clearly the first two years 2000 and 2001, it was the most horrendous experience we had with the UN because we kept having people come into our office…we were all activists for the resistance so we knew a lot [and] not just on one issue: we could speak about the economy, about health, about women, all this stuff. So our office was a source of information on many issues and they question me, ‘why are Timorese women so subservient?’ How do you know they are subservient? I mean based on what? This is a general perception. Culturally I could ask the same questions to you anywhere in the world, why are your women so subservient? I said if characteristics of culture during a certain period of time [were discriminatory] then I would say sorry,
Europe was really bad, and Australia is not doing very well either. So I said if you ask me this type of question, I don’t have the answers, because I don’t see every Timorese woman as subservient starting from me (Interview no. 21).

The security or insecurity of foreign women was also called into question as the patriarchal culture evident in Timor-Leste could “manifest itself in aggression towards malae women who come to Timor-Leste to live and work” (Interview no. 10). Gender and the way it is conceived of inherently involves cultural frameworks, as the production and reproduction of gendered norms occurs at individual and collective levels in both private and in public arenas. Gender norms are fluid and contextual, stratified by class and other existing hierarchies. They are both a consequence and determinant of cultural practices and tradition. This is also true within the context of peacebuilding projects, in which gender projects often seek to define the parameters of concepts such as equality and democracy.

In Timor-Leste, during the Second National Women’s Congress in 2004, culture was emphasised as central to the resulting Platform for Action and a gender analysis of cultural practices was stressed again at the 2008 Congress (Niner 2012, 139). The 2001 Women’s Charter of Rights in East Timor contained an article that concerned tradition and women’s rights (Cristalis & Scott 2005, 80-81). This article specifically argued for equal rights to inheritance, regulation of barlake and polygamy to prevent violence against women and increased representation in traditional decision making processes (see Cristalis & Scott 2005, appendix 4, 180-81). Therefore there are real concerns among East Timorese women’s activists that some traditional practices – or their interpretation – can undermine improved gender relations in the country. Moreover, patriarchal attitudes are indeed evident in Timor-Leste, and these are perpetuated by both women and men (Trembath, Grenfell & Noronha 2010, 11). The director of one national women’s organisation noted how patriarchal attitudes in Timor-Leste could present obstacles, but that there was also a lot of work going in to combat such perceptions:

"Usually when we discuss with gender advisor’s they say that ‘oh your system, the patriarchal system is very strong’, I said yeah we cannot just change in one minute or one year, it’s a long process. But it’s good, the ideas, we are starting with the ideas and then how to implement takes ages. But it’s good; the contribution of the gender advisor’s is also helping the Timorese people (Interview no. 24)."
The external dimension of gender in UN peacebuilding assumes that gender equality in the domestic context will be rooted in something particular to the local population. One participant, a staff member for UNMIT, explained that he felt there was “an assumption of a patriarchal system [in Timor-Leste] and that this system was well established; this [is] used as an excuse rather than seen as a site in which behaviours can change” (Interview no. 13). While there is an internal dimension to gender mainstreaming, this is generally concerned with improving the UN’s own standing in terms of gender balance in staff and improving its response to gendered concerns in conflict and post-conflict settings. It is less concerned with how the peacebuilding presence itself can shape, define and interact with normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity in the domestic setting and its own role in defining such conceptions. The behaviour of UN staff can also exacerbate existing hierarchical power relations, including gender relations, demonstrated in cases where peacekeepers themselves have perpetrated sexual exploitation, abuse and violence against the populations they are supposedly sent to protect. These factors have been discussed in previous chapters.

In Timor-Leste, a dichotomous understanding of East Timorese ‘culture’ and ‘gender’ was also presented as resistance to implementing and socialising gender norms. Such resistance framed gender as a “western culture” which was in binary opposition or threatening to East Timorese culture. ‘Gender’, understood as isolating its concerns to women, was seen as an international construct largely imposed in Timor-Leste, rather than a continuation of pre-existing advocacy around women’s rights activism, which began in 1975. This was explained by one UN agency staff member who stated that in Timor-Leste, “‘gender’ is seen as a process brought on by donors” (Interview no. 12), an understanding which serves to eradicate both women’s contributions to the resistance struggle and the activism towards women’s rights during the period of Indonesian occupation. Moreover, this understanding also fails to take into consideration the fact that East Timorese women’s groups themselves influenced the UN’s own commitments to gender mainstreaming, particularly during UNTAET where the Gender Affairs Unit took as its mandate the Platform for Action produced at the First National Women’s Congress.

Examples of resistance on the basis that ‘gender’ was an imported culture, given by East Timorese women’s NGO staff members who had confronted such resistance, included statements such as “we already have our culture”, “don’t ask us to change our culture”, and a “woman’s place comes from this culture.” One participant explained:
One of the examples in regards to the training we organise, we say that men and women should be the same and international people also say that men and women should be the same. But afterwards, men who participate in the training always say they don’t agree with that statement, because they think that foreigners come to Timor-Leste and that just by implementing this statement it might clear our culture (Interview no. 18).

Consistent with the trend of top-down peacebuilding implementation, civil society organisations, including women’s organisations, are utilised in implementing donor policy. The use of local organisations supports the broader liberal peace theory that engaging local organisations will legitimise the international presence and appropriately socialise their programs as well as foster a functioning civil society during post-conflict reconstruction. In Timor-Leste, women’s organisations were vehicles for the UN to implement and socialise gender work, and thus they became the coalface between international gender norm advocates and the broader population along with their own heterogeneous conceptions of ‘gender’. Essentially, women’s organisations are seen as intermediaries to larger social groups through which international gender norms can be channelled and implemented (Alvarez in El-Kassem 2008). Staff members of women’s organisations are trained and in turn are expected to pass this knowledge to local populations. The director of a national women’s organisation explained how gender work was disseminated via women’s organisations in Timor-Leste:

[They hear gender] from all social organisations. From the UN, from the government, from civil society…I think mostly from civil society organisations, because the UN used us, the civil society organisations, to deliver this information. There is a kind of human rights, I think they do directly, but in other agencies they use civil society organisations to spread this information through the community and let them know about this terminology that we use and since we cannot use this [gender] terminology but we use [the explanation] that men and women both have rights for this, for that. [It is] especially focused on primary basic needs: school, health, economic things to survive (Interview no. 26).

The perception that gender is an imported western culture has created a set of problems for national civil society organisations in Timor-Leste who partnered with UN missions to ‘spread the information’. National women’s organisations are viewed as taking on the priorities of the international gender framework, over and above what could be considered a local or traditional
perspective. In her fieldwork in the district area of Lospalos, Timor-Leste, Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes (2009) found similarly. In the context of a resurgence of traditional and patriarchal norms, Corcoran-Nantes (2009, 169) states that gender was simply “not on the agenda”; continuing:

Traditionally in Timor, gender is seen as a concept that foreigners are imposing on people as a trade-off for support in terms of funding and technical assistance. Along with terms such as ‘human rights’ and ‘democracy’ the term gender sits on a bookshelf with a donor logo plastered on the front.

This suggests that ‘gender’ is perceived as an instrumentalist project of international actors and donors. This perspective, and the resistance it nurtures, can in part be explained by post-colonial feminist literature that highlights the perception of external interventions as imperialist projects. Post-colonial feminist literature frames gender work contained within such interventions as instrumentalist in that they serve the broader goals of the intervention more readily rather than women’s human rights in the given context (Hunt 2006). In this regard, petitioning for women’s human rights acts as a veneer for the broader goals of the intervention. Angst that UN peacebuilding represented a contemporary form of imperialism was explicitly stated by the former Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão. As well as demonstrating the conceptual attachment between the international presence and the concept of ‘gender’, in 2001 he spoke out against what he saw as an:

….obsessive acculturation to standards that hundreds of international experts try to convey to the East Timorese, who are hungry for values: democracy (many of those who teach us never practised it in their own countries because they became UN staff members); gender (many of the women who attend the workshops know that in their countries this issue is no example for others)….It might sound as though I am speaking against these noble values of participation. I do not mind if it happens in the democratic minds of the people. What seems to be absurd is that we absorb standards just to pretend we look like a democratic society and please our masters of independence (in Charlesworth & Wood 2002, 335).6

Therefore in the context of UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste ‘gender’, understood as pertaining to women’s rights, became politicised, arguably further undermining the potential of activism in

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6 This also references the ‘shallow’ nature of democratisation and peacebuilding mechanisms.
this regard. The above quote demonstrates how gender was part of a political ‘line in the sand’ over what was ‘local’ and East Timorese, and what was ‘international’ and imported. A critical feminist perspective not only demands that gender analysis is integral to conflict analysis, but academics and activists alike should be wary of the ways in which gender is “used” and the implications of this (Pratt & Richter-Devroe 2011, 496).

The role of centralised peacebuilding

Resistance to gender programs in Timor-Leste was additionally characterised by rural-urban differences and suspicion was directed towards those national level actors connected to the urban space. ‘National level’ was used to describe the level at which the UN operated at, as well as the national Dili-based organisations that were generally able to garner UN and international donor support. ‘Local level’ was used to describe the district or village level space, where resources were more limited. This is in direct opposition to the way in which ‘local’ is used in international peace rhetoric, where it is used to denote the ‘domestic’ space of the host state, whereas here it actually denotes heterogeneity and hierarchy within the domestic arena. UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste has been centralised at the national, urban level, with their activities and outputs (and associated benefits) centralised in that space (Moxham & Caparic 2013). The economic benefits of peacebuilding in Timor-Leste have been concentrated in Dili, and even then distributed unequally (Moxham & Caparic 2013, 3124; Wallis 2013a). This is consistent with broader criticisms of the liberal peace operations, where unequal peace dividends threaten the legitimacy of these interventions, especially to those who are frustrated by feelings of exclusion from the benefits of peacebuilding (Richmond 2015; Scambary 2009).

In general this reflects the broader abstraction of the UN’s work and outputs to people’s day-to-day lives; as the director of one national NGO suggested, “many people feel that the UN is so far from us” (Interview no. 14). Chapter four discussed the issue of centralised peacebuilding and the implications of centralisation for women’s empowerment. Essentially, ‘empowerment’ benefited a limited cohort in the urban space. Such an impact has in turn contributed to the resistance faced by national women’s organisations, especially where national women’s organisations faced similar legitimacy issues in the eyes of ‘local’ populations. One participant explained the frustration of feeling that the gender and peacebuilding work was only conducted in the urban space:

And then like the activity, talking about the activity that involves the women, like women’s day or rural women’s day: Loron feto rural [Rural women’s day]. Sometimes the community says, ‘we didn’t feel that women’s day’. This
is to celebrate for all women in Timor-Leste, to involve all women, but they say that the activity is only in the centre, only in Dili. But for the district? No one is coming to do the activity. They say that they have a small grant, they get funding [for example from SEPI] but that this is not much, only for the implementation. But they have a plan, they have a lot of plans, for every day, but they say that they didn’t have money, they can’t do that, because the only activity is in the centre…This is difficult for the rural involvement. This can be a challenge for women’s involvement. Oh they are talking a lot, speaking a lot, but they didn’t do anything from that [discussion]. They didn’t visit; sometimes they need to visit to see the situation (Interview no. 5).

Like elsewhere, Timor-Leste is not a homogenised space of equally placed women and men. A distinct difference is that between the urban centre, Dili, and Timor-Leste’s rural areas, as well as socio-economic inequalities present in both urban and rural settings. In 2011, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty stated that poverty in Timor-Leste was “pervasive and widespread” and that the majority of the population living in rural areas were trapped in intergenerational cycles of poverty (UN News Centre 2011). Much of the formal gender mainstreaming benefits have remained centralised in Dili, as examined in chapter four, which is also true of other peace dividends such as access to jobs, education, health care and so on. One member of the East Timorese women’s movement, active since the resistance, recounted that in working with the UN the activities of organisations also became more centralised, as this was where resources and funding was located:

All the UN bodies were concentrated at national level. So the activities from women were also concentrated at the national level, all the information that we got, the leadership or training that we got. So in the rural areas they cannot reach this information, no radio, no communications, sometimes we go but not so frequently. So this is a gap (Interview no. 26).

This suggests that resistance to ‘gender’, and particularly to national women’s organisations trying to socialise these norms, must also be understood in the context of a heavily centralised international presence after 1999 which was again intensified after 2006. The UN presence had lost its legitimacy during UNTAET, accused of being elitist, and generally of being abstracted from people’s day-to-day lives. The centralised nature of activities and outputs is associated with what many term a ‘top-down’ (as opposed to ‘bottom-up’) approach to peacebuilding.
Women’s organisations themselves were also frustrated at times with the top-heavy approach to peacebuilding. A top-heavy approach did appear to alleviate at “non-emergency” times, with the immediate post-occupation aftermath and the 2006 crisis period in Dili considered emergency times (Interview no. 14). Following the 2006 crisis and the establishment of UNMIT, one participant explained that some women’s organisations felt that they had to relinquish control of programs in the face of a heavily increased peacebuilding presence (Interview no. 14). Although successive UN missions in Timor-Leste have been accused of being ‘Dili-centric’, this focus was more intensely narrowed from 2006:

A big issue is where the focus of aid has been. One of the causes of the 2006 crisis was the bilaterals’ and UN’s overwhelming focus on strengthening the government – very Dili-centric. The average person doesn’t think that much about the government. This just got people frustrated, and people feel alienated from what is going on (CDA Collaborative Learning Project 2008, 16).

One UNMIT Gender Unit staff member noted that resistance to gender equality came from the broader population, or “out there, and the influence of patriarchal values in traditional society which [was] not relevant to the work of the Gender Unit” which was more focused on the government and the security sector (Interview no. 2). This is demonstrative of the centralised institutional focus of that mission. The focus on the government and the security sector meant that UNMIT’s Gender Unit was occupied with ensuring the presence of gender focal points in various departments and training both government staff members and members of the security sector (Interview no. 2).

Mistrust and apathy directed towards ‘national level’ bodies like national governance and the UN mission’s was also directed towards those national level women’s organisations that partnered with UN agencies. This was compounded by the perception, detailed above, that ‘gender’ was an imported cultural framework that sought to dislodge East Timorese culture. Resistance to gender programs was fuelled by the perception that national organisations were only working in partnership with UN and implementing imported programs, rather than the organisations advocating for equality in their own right. The participant cited above continued:

7 This may also be related to the fact that a number of national Dili-based women’s organisations were struggling prior to the 2006 crisis as funding and interest from donors – which a number of their programs were dependent on – continually dwindled from 2002 onwards (Olsson 2009).
And they say ‘you are from the national [level], gender is from the outside’...And then because everything is concentrated at the [national level]...they thought that we are influenced by the malae to deliver this information...Not just suspicious of malae, but us too, me too. Because we’re from the urban areas (Interview no. 26).

This is consistent with Levitt and Merry’s (2009, 449) contention that those actors who communicate international frameworks to domestic audiences are often the subjects of mistrust, conversant as they are with ‘both sides’ and “controlling the flow of information.” While having UN support has been hugely beneficial in some respects, it has fostered this mistrust and such organisations can be perceived as simply mouth-pieces of the international community rather than as advocating for gender equality in their own right. From a post-colonial feminist perspective this is an inevitable consequence where ‘gender’ is perceived as an instrumentalist framework that ultimately supports interventionist tendencies, rather than women’s activism. Some authors have pointed out that the use of local or national organisations and civil society organisations in implementing gender norms in peacebuilding contexts can destabilise unity across geographic and socio-economic lines in support of gender equality (Smith 2015). For example, Iraqi women’s organisations were utilised in implementing international ‘democracy promotion’ goals. Nadeen El-Kassem (2008) suggests that one outcome of this is the marginalisation of oppositional voices in women’s activism and that those organisations that do participate show signs of de-politicisation.

Discussion of the resistance faced by national gender equality advocates in Timor-Leste challenges the assumption that national organisations will legitimise peacebuilding activities on the ground. Instead, national women’s organisations in Timor-Leste were caught up with the same legitimacy issues of the successive UN peacebuilding missions; conceptually, national women’s organisations were attached to the UN presence and its attendant ‘culture’. The next section, however, demonstrates the role of national women’s organisations in negotiating gender norms to facilitate their socialisation and implementation. The central way that this was done was in contextualising ‘gender’ to the East Timorese historical context, highlighting that East Timorese women had been fighting to improve their rights well before the establishment of UN peacebuilding in the country.

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8 Jabri (2013) however queries the degree of agency these roles demonstrate given that the activity of the national partners is predicated on the international presence and the programs they are trying to impart.
Women's organisations negotiating gender

The concept of negotiation reflects the socialisation stage outlined in norm diffusion theories. Socialisation is part of the ‘internalisation’ stage in that once international norms have been institutionalised (for example a government’s ratification of CEDAW) they are then internalised, whereby the norm shapes the behaviour of local actors (Keck & Sikkink 1998; Alldén 2010; Månsson 2008). The international norm of gender equality is represented chiefly by CEDAW, DEVAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. Specifically pertaining to UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding is Resolution 1325 and subsequent Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Together, international norms regarding gender equality are propagated by both gender mainstreaming and gender balancing and suggest that “gender equality cannot be achieved without (1) including women as policymakers and (2) considering the gendered implications of all public policies” (Krook & True 2012, 121). The existence of these international mechanisms is vital for gender equality to be considered at the international level. In addition they provide rallying points behind which local actors can advocate for their rights in domestic contexts.9 However, linear conceptions of norm diffusion do not entirely capture processes of negotiation around the adoption, adaptation and socialisation of particular norms. Moreover, as Alldén (2010) highlights, norm diffusion in post-conflict democratising societies is comparatively under-researched. Linear conceptions suggest that the ‘norm’ blossoms in the international domain and is then devolved to various local counterparts, eventually institutionalised and internalised by domestic populations. What this section highlights though, and consistent with Mona Krook and Jacqui True’s (2012, 108) contentions, resistance to norms in post-conflict contexts suggests that they are in fact mediated and negotiated by agents.

In the face of the resistance outlined above, a number of national women’s organisations with whom I spoke talked of negotiating international gender norms. Much of this related to explaining that ‘gender’ is not an imported or foreign concept and is in fact consistent with women’s prior activism in Timor-Leste, the principles of the resistance movement and consistent with East Timorese culture. For example, the head of one national women’s organisation with a long history of advocating for women’s rights in Timor-Leste said about the organisations work: “this is not gender from outside, we already struggled for that…we cannot use the gender terminology but we use another way” (Interview no. 26). This confirms a more complex process of implementation in domestic settings, rather than international actors being

9 Demonstrative of this is the adoption of National Action Plans (NAP) on violence against women as domestic implementations of Resolution 1325 (see The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace & Security 2006, 48-77).
the sole drivers for such changes. Timor-Leste illustrates this well as East Timorese women’s activists, members of UNTAET’s Gender Affairs Unit and of UNIFEM (now UN Women) partnered to lobby both UNTAET and the East Timorese political elite to achieve key objectives in 2001 (Pires 2004; Whittington 2003). Partnership between national activists, UNMIT’s Gender Affairs Unit and international NGOs occurred again in advocating for, drafting and implementing the Law Against Domestic Violence, which was adopted in 2010 (Hall 2009).

Such negotiations are essentially about trying to find a synergy between the existing women’s movement and the language of ‘gender’ that was viewed as attached to the international presence. In part this has meant some women’s organisations needing to disassociate themselves from the international presence. In turn then some activists emphasised the pre-existing women’s movement in Timor-Leste and connected this activism to the struggle for independence. As explained by the director of one national women’s NGO:

I think that since they start they use gender, just gender. When they established the Gender Affair’s Units they start with this language, and also in the dissemination they use gender. But Timorese people, we are the ones who explain that gender means this and that, so we use our own languages to tell them what these things are. But some people think that gender is a thing from abroad, from outside, not ours, not from our culture, but when we explain it yeah even before [1999] we know gender. When, during the resistance, we struggle for our self-determination, we struggle for our rights; this is gender too. Women have to have access to these rights, this is gender; men have these, children have these, this is gender. We know the Universal Declaration [of Human Rights] talks about these rights so if women cannot get them, or men or children cannot get them then this is not right, this is inequality. This is kind of another way to explain to people. If you talk about UN, they use this terminology and then when they are in the explanation we the local people have to explain about what gender means, what are gender roles and everything, and relate it to their daily life, work, or interconnections or inter-related things and analyse these things (Interview no. 26).

As the above quotation demonstrates, connecting ‘gender’ to the resistance struggle was a tactic of socialising or negotiating around gender norms. The narrative of heroic resistance remains politically salient in post-occupation Timor-Leste and political legitimacy is supported through
participation in armed resistance.10 This was especially prominent immediately after occupation and personality politics continue to dominate party lines rather than policy (Leach & Kingsbury 2013, 22-23). The director of another national women’s organisation further explained the task of contextualising ‘gender’:

But it’s not just one day, not just one day or two days, it’s a big job, from 1999 to now. And we have to bring that to the resistance time, how women and men worked together to fight to get our independence. And we have to analyse again during the occupation women do men’s roles or not, or just follow you….we have to analyse these things, we have to analyse everything. This is the way (Interview no. 24).

Resistance to gender equality has been neither fixed nor uniform throughout each UN mission. According to two participants, the gains made in terms of gender equality in the early years of UN peacebuilding (1999—2004) were hard won by both the East Timorese women’s movement and the support they received from international actors, like gender units and UN agencies (Interview no. 2; Interview no. 12). During UNMIT though these same participants felt that there was increasing awareness and familiarity with concepts relating to gender, noting that there were improvements in some areas like sharing of household tasks and women’s access to public sector roles (Interview no. 2; Interview no. 12). Negotiation was also framed in terms of combating patriarchal attitudes in Timor-Leste, for example:

There are some people during 2000—2006 I think they were very resistant to that, with us when we talk about gender. I still remember the first time when we went to [this village] to a seminar and we invited a priest, we invited traditional leaders, we invited local key leaders, and we argued for two days. They were very confrontational because you know the patriarchal system is male dominated in everything. But then we had the case study, we bring the local leaders to their own lives every day and they say ‘Yes! You are right’ but first they were very confrontational with us. They said ‘No, no, no, this is from malae [foreigner], from outside’...[We said] ‘Let’s have a discussion on these things’...But you see, this is the kind of negotiation, a kind of raising awareness (Interview no. 26).

10 This also means that women’s role in the resistance can be – and is – easily denigrated as, although integral, women were less often armed when compared to men (Interview no. 13).
Discussion here of women’s organisations negotiating and socialising gender norms highlights the way in which different actors contextualise international norms in particular settings. Moreover, negotiation reflects agency in that some actors in national women’s organisations were socialising their own aims and goals. In connecting post-occupation gender work to the resistance movement, East Timorese women’s activists were overcoming the notion that ‘gender’ is an imported culture and instead related directly to their work towards gender equality.

One prominent male gender equality advocate discussed that even where there may not be resistance to gender, exactly what behaviour was expected to follow gender trainings and focus groups was unclear. This is again consistent with Krook and True’s (2012) contention that the actual “content” of international norms can be vague. For example, following workshops some participants would approach this advocate to say “we are confused, how do we do it?” (Interview no. 23), meaning ‘how do we do gender?’ His response was as follows:

Many people read many books about gender and follow the workshops or seminars [at the] international and local level. But they are confused about what to practice for gender. So I give some tips, a strategy. I have tips I give to them. For example, I talk about custom, I say mostly in our culture sometimes we don’t invite a woman to sit and decide [at meetings]; only men decide. So I say we should invite the mother because…why not invite them? So it’s practical…I give tips (Interview no. 23).

Another participant explained how some people interpret gender trainings:

It is challenging when they implement the training, especially for men. Sometimes, the participants think that ‘oh ok so the man will be the passive one’, [because] the organisation only talks about women (Interview no. 16).

In his critical analyses of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, Oliver Richmond (2011b) has made a case for a theory of resistance in International Relations literature. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Richmond (2011b, 421) claims that in contemporary International Relations theory there has been “little space for an understanding of the potential legitimacy of resistance.” Reflecting again on Coomaraswamy’s (2002) claim that efforts at promoting women’s international human rights need to recognise the historical legacy of colonialism and its claims to protect third world women, this perhaps seems like a legitimate conclusion: that resistance is
legitimate, a form of ‘strategic knowledge’ that aims to subvert and elude power rather than confront it head on (Foucault 1979, 1980 cited in Richmond 2011b, 422). Just because the gender equality project within peacebuilding has an emancipatory agenda does not mean that the automatic response should be to deride all resistance to it, nor frame such resistance as inherently a manifestation of patriarchy. Yet there is also a case to be made for being wary of the idea that resistance to peacebuilding is uniformly legitimate, as it does not take heed of the varied, multi-faceted motivations behind various forms of resistance. Gender has certainly been politicised in post-occupation Timor-Leste but the motivations of those who resist gender equality programming on the basis that it is an imported concept remain unclear. As Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott (2005, 163) explain:

For East Timorese men opposed to cultural change in gender relations, blaming the UN for importing feminist or ‘western’ ideas has been both logical and easy. Some men have threatened to campaign for a return to women’s subordination when the UN leaves. The backlash has led women activists to reconsider the rights-based approach that has framed their strategies over the past decade.

This highlights that consideration of gender in peacebuilding literature, theory and practice is essential. Failing to take a gendered perspective into account in understanding resistance in peacebuilding (and in examining resistance to what) dangerously ignores that resistance could be a function of existing discriminatory hierarchical norms. Yet resistance is certainly worthy of examination and I would suggest, in this case, especially given the politicisation of gender in post-occupation Timor-Leste. Negotiation on the part of women’s organisations that were faced with this resistance demonstrates the contested nature of some of the norms that peace operations seek to impart.

Conclusion

In peacebuilding theory, a number of authors have pointed to the need to include domestic actors in international interventions for a more ‘emancipatory’ peacebuilding agenda (Richmond 2007; Futamura & Notaras 2011). As this discussion shows, their inclusion has a legitimising function for international interventions, and domestic organisations and actors can find themselves as the go-between between international and local actors, undertaking socialisation roles. In turn, in including domestic organisations, these actors’ relationships with domestic populations can also be changed and their own legitimacy and relevance can be called into question as they are conceptually tied to the international community. The arguments above
suggest that the work of national civil society organisations in peacebuilding will not necessarily legitimise the work of the international peacebuilding mission. Instead, those organisations can face similar resistance to their work, namely perceptions that they are vehicles to import international constructs not relevant in the domestic setting.

Furthermore, the chapter has examined the diverse (and potentially hierarchical) nature of the ‘local’ space, which can impair the ability of ‘national’ organisations working to socialise international norms. This is in direct contrast to the way in which ‘local’ is used in international peacebuilding rhetoric (and in some critical perspectives) that use the term ‘local’ to represent a homogenised domestic space. The empirical data presented here has shown that in Timor-Leste there was not one single conception of a domestic arena, but instead it was imbricated with ‘national’ space and ‘local’ space. Importantly, the chapter has also argued that in examining the relative success or limitations of UN gender work in peacebuilding missions, the role of domestic actors is fundamental to understanding the complexities of such analysis. Likewise, in examining national resistance to international gender norms, the presence of centralised international peacebuilding presence must also be taken into consideration. The following chapter offers concluding remarks on the arguments presented in this thesis, suggesting that when the a gender lens is used to examine both peacebuilding and its gendered aspirations, we are better able to understand the multiple ways in which peacebuilding is constituted by gendered identities and reproduces gendered subjects. In the case of Timor-Leste, these two issues are considered alongside the notion of national agency and resistance.
8: Conclusion

This thesis has argued that ‘gender’ in liberal peacebuilding carried out by the UN represents a particular cultural framework, not a neutral set of uncontested standards, which has important implications for how women are empowered, protected, and incorporated into peacebuilding practice. Certainly UN missions in Timor-Leste provided a model of how to ‘do’ gender – gender working groups, gender focal points, gender mainstreaming throughout each mission and within the Government of Timor-Leste, gender balance in public life – all of which with the penultimate objective of empowering and protecting East Timorese women. Short term, measurable programs are privileged rather than taking longer-term perspectives (Hudson 2012b, 93). The demands of producing short-term and measurable outcomes lead to fixation on technical, add-on approaches. In addition, despite this increasing gender rhetoric, gender work is marginalised within peacebuilding missions and women’s representation in decision-making roles remains low (Charlesworth 2005; Weiss 2012, 119-23), a situation that has been evident in Timor-Leste. There is a paradox then as within the UN system there is a “thriving gender mainstreaming industry” that produces reports, toolkits and handbooks while simultaneously gender issues continue to be marginalised within peacebuilding, appearing in only limited conceptualisations (Hudson 2012b, 93). What this thesis has argued is that outside of technical implementation of ‘gender’ there are complex issues pertaining to the way in which ‘women’ and ‘gender’ are conceived of in peacebuilding and myriad permutations of how gender can be understood to inform peacebuilding. Consistent with Laura Shepherd’s (2011) argument, the analysis in this thesis makes an argument for the persistent need for both material and discursive change in the formulation of gender and women and peace.

As the preceding chapters have shown, incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding is neither straightforward nor uncomplicated in terms of both practice and outcomes. It has been argued that there remain important limitations in the conceptualisation of gender in peacebuilding, and, that through technical approaches and bureaucratic rigidity only narrow considerations of women’s empowerment and protection are implemented. In addition, where positive outcomes have prevailed these are applicable to only a limited cohort as benefits are stratified along class and geographic lines. In this thesis I have illustrated how broader criticisms of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm – missions are centralised, marginalise local ownership and ignore local contextual factors, and issues pertaining to power and agency – are equally applicable to considerations of gender equality and women’s rights in peacebuilding. Drawing on empirical data from the case study of Timor-Leste, I have specifically argued that
the way in which ‘gender’ sits in liberal peacebuilding can be in tension with the socio-political transformation required for more equitable gender relations.

The incorporation of a rhetorical commitment to gender equality into UN peacebuilding has provided peacebuilding endeavours with an additional legitimising function. It suggests a more egalitarian inclusive approach that is more consistent with human security principles, principles that have been increasingly part of peacebuilding rhetoric since Boutrous-Ghali’s *An agenda for peace* (1995). Humanitarian justifications are used to endorse actions that are largely military (Orford 2003, 11-12). If the UN claims to make interventions on behalf of vulnerable people – a word that is often used in conjunction with women – then it becomes less of a force wielded at the behest of powerful states and more humanitarian and equally accessible. This is not an argument against humanitarian justifications for UN intervention. However, it is problematic that humanitarian justifications – such as improved gender equality or the protection of civilians – are rhetorically incorporated in a manner that may perpetuate the structures that have underpinned insecurity to begin with and to essentially endorse militarist responses to insecurity (Harrington 2010, 145-46; Hudson 2012a, 450; Orford 2003, 11-12).

The underlying framework for the UN’s Women, Peace and Security agenda is to empower and protect women in post-conflict reconstruction and to prevent the targeted victimisation of women during war. These objectives are sought through mechanisms such as strengthening legal measures to prevent sexual and gender based violence in conflict, or at least hold perpetrators accountable, mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout peace support operations and to buttress this mainstreaming through achieving a gender balance in all operational areas of peace support operations as well as in the national institutions peace operations support in country. The preceding chapters have illustrated however that there remain substantial gaps between these rhetorical commitments to women’s rights and security, the process through which these commitments are sought, and the actual empowerment and security of women in disparate circumstances during post-conflict reconstruction.

Whereas the framework of the Women, Peace and Security agenda has broad goals that speak to the empowerment and security of women through international security and the cessation of violent conflict, it is the implementation of this framework and its interpretation in policy that have more often fallen short. Technical approaches that treat women and girls as a homogenous group are common (Myrttinen et al. 2014, 12). These approaches do deliver some benefits, but the more complex questions of hierarchical gender relations and/or gendered identities – and their constitution by and constitution of peace and conflict – are left untouched (Myrttinen et al.
Moreover, by adding women in a technical way – such as in Timor-Leste where women were encouraged to learn computers and administration in the PNTL – there is actually a lot of gendering going on, meaning there is continued attribution of particular traits based on sex difference. Program approaches that seek to empower women without challenging the underlying gendered societal expectations will simply flow around ingrained gender relations. For example, in research conducted on the impacts of gender mainstreaming during UNTAET and UNMISET, policies designed to encourage more women and young children to work and attend training workshops did increase numbers. Yet for women to attend and participate in meetings meant that a female sibling would have to take on their domestic duties and even then permission was often sought before attending (Koyama & Myrttinen 2007, 40). This in turn negatively impacted on the female sibling’s ability to attend school.

The value of scholarship presented in this thesis is that it evaluates the process of gender in UN peacebuilding in a particular context in order to shed light on gender and women in peacebuilding more broadly. For example, the arguments presented here suggest it would be worthwhile further investigating power dynamics in partnerships between UN peacebuilding missions, UN agencies and domestic women’s organisations, and in turn those organisations capacities to work in local settings, although the results of this further investigation may differ from the case of Timor-Leste. One of the key lessons emerging from the empirical research on the Timor-Leste case study is the need of having ‘local voices’ in international peacebuilding narratives, and in this case the women’s organisations who acted as vehicles in socialising international gender norms. In exploring questions of agency in relation to gender in peacebuilding, this thesis has shown that the actions of East Timorese women were essential to how the gender component of peacebuilding operated in Timor-Leste, and indeed its appearance in the first mission, UNTAET. While the thesis has made arguments that have implications for how gender is understood and practiced in international peace operations, this does not mean that implications at national or ‘local’ levels should be overlooked, as this is in essence the site at which behaviours are sought to be changed.

The arguments have been addressed in different ways in the preceding chapters. Each chapter drew on empirical data that collected the perspectives of national and international stakeholders involved in building peace in Timor-Leste. Chapter three detailed the development of the East Timorese women’s movement and the context into which UN peacebuilding deployed. As peacebuilding commenced, the UN did establish a gender unit in its first mission although they were initially reticent on this issue. Subsequent missions also established gender units although the priorities of each differed, more readily reflecting the wider mission priorities. The chapter
highlighted the role of East Timorese women themselves in advocating for the UN to remain committed to its own ‘gender goals’ (see also Roynestad 2003). Not only were the UN’s interactions with the East Timorese women’s movement characterised by the marginalised position of gender in peacebuilding, but also the centralised, top-heavy nature of peacebuilding in the country, which marginalised indigenous political frameworks. Therefore, while women are also impacted by the nature of liberal peacebuilding which has been disparaged by critical perspectives, women are further marginalised where ‘gender’ or women’s issues are viewed as an unnecessary add-on, peripheral to the real issue of military security.

Activism in Timor-Leste for improved gender equality began and remains rooted in the struggle for Timor-Leste’s self-determination, firstly from colonialism, and subsequently from Indonesia’s military occupation. When UN peacebuilding arrived in the country though, activism for gender equality and women’s rights went through two important changes. Firstly, the changing context, the lifting of occupation, opened up space for more forthright activism and the possibility of real changes in policy and practice. Secondly, those advocating for women’s rights and equality had to navigate this new landscape coupled with an influx of international peacebuilders with their own agendas who could both support and inhibit their activism. At the same time the UN had its own burgeoning institutional practice on incorporating a gender perspective into post-conflict peacebuilding, policies designed to improve the position of women in peacebuilding and in post-conflict societies. As one of the first UN peacebuilding missions to contain a gender unit, UNTAET represents a special case for both Timor-Leste’s post-conflict reconstruction and the development of gender policies in peacebuilding. Over the decade that followed UNTAET, the depth and form of UN engagement changed and the form in which successive missions engaged with women’s organisations also changed; indeed UNMIS and UNOTIL supplied limited, if any, support to national women’s organisations. The relatively consistent UN presence had important implications for policy processes and outcomes of gender work in Timor-Leste.

With this analysis in mind, chapter four examined what the empowerment mandate achieved in Timor-Leste and how women were empowered by UN peacebuilding. The East Timorese women’s movement had clear ideas about the role women were to play in the post-occupation political reconstruction of their country. These goals were mostly consistent with the UN formulation of empowerment which limited its attention to the representation of women in governance structures. Despite this synergy the East Timorese women’s movement was stymied by some sectors of the UN mission regarding a key platform of their agenda: quota’s for women’s representation in national parliament. UNTAET did however institute a 50 per cent
quota for women’s representation in village councils (UNTAET 2000a). This can best be described as ambiguity in the way UNTAET went about establishing Timor-Leste’s administrative system “from village to central level” (Downie 2007, 30). Despite the debate around quotas at the national level and the ad hoc institutionalisation of equal representation at the village level women in Timor-Leste have consistently held high representation in national parliament.

Yet chapter four highlighted two important features of women’s empowerment in Timor-Leste. First, that women’s high representation in parliament has generally extended to only a limited cohort of already elite and educated women. Second, that women’s empowerment in the formal arena has not translated into substantive equality, nor has it supported women’s broader political activism. Given the political grounding of women’s prior activism in Timor-Leste this had important implications for how women’s groups could advocate to the UN presence. The abstraction of UN peacebuilding to day-to-day living is also salient in this regard. Although UN peacebuilding has coincided with substantial political change in Timor-Leste, it did not infiltrate village life and was frequently criticised for alienating the local populace. UN peacebuilding in Timor-Leste maintained centralised power and, in the quota debate, undermined women’s access to this centralised domain. At the same time women’s representation was instituted at the village level, a level that has been poorly connected to the national political domain through UN peacebuilding, and an area that remains stratified by patriarchal relations.

Whether the high number of women in parliament has meant that patriarchal hierarchies in Timor-Leste have been challenged remains questionable. In a country where economically and geographically marginalised women and men are disenfranchised from the benefits of peacebuilding and development, what can a high number of educated, elite women in parliament tell us about empowerment in a broader context? This is not to say that these mechanisms should be abandoned entirely, which has become the argument of some opposed to a gender component in peacebuilding (see for example the analysis of the quota issue in chapter three). Instead it fulfils the liberal principle of equality of representation/access but eschews a gender relational1 approach.

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1 Henri Myrttinen et al. (2014, 5) use the term ‘gender relational’ advocate for an approach “built on an understanding of how gendered identities are constructed through the societal power relations between and among women, men, girls, boys and members of sexual and gender minorities…it examines the interplay between gender and other identity markers, such as age, social class, sexuality, disability, ethnic or religious background, marital status or urban/rural setting.”
Following this analysis of women’s empowerment in peacebuilding, chapter five examined what the protection mandate achieved in Timor-Leste and how (or whether) women were protected by UN peacebuilding. As with empowerment, security in post-conflict zones requires multidimensional understandings of multiple issues that can undermine group and individual security in varied contexts. As Louise Olsson (2009) has pointed out, women in Timor-Leste benefited as much as others from the ending of a violent occupation era and the stabilisation of the national security situation by InterFET in 1999 and UNMIT in 2006. However, the security issues that individuals face in post-conflict zones, the issues that continue to inform Women, Peace and Security resolutions, have persisted in Timor-Leste despite the presence of peacekeepers and a relatively improved ‘security situation’. For example, UNTAET presided over a period in Timor-Leste in which domestic violence continued and increased unabated. Focusing on state security “side steps” the notion of individual security, and traditional state-centred conceptions of security are “bereft of a gender perspective” (Groves, Resurreccion & Doneys 2009, 188). The rationale of prioritising military security is that this will foster an environment in which all other tasks can be carried out. Yet as a number of scholars have previously pointed out, militarised security can undermine the security of individuals (Tickner 1995; Enloe 2000; Cockburn & Enloe 2012).

Peacekeepers, private security contractors and humanitarian and aid workers associated with peacekeeping missions have themselves perpetrated sexual violence and assault against the populations they are in country to protect (Csáky 2008; Martin 2005; Mendelson 2005; Harrington 2010, 145-68; Razack 2004). The persistence of gendered violence post-conflict further demonstrates that traditional security concerns and the institution of rule of law generally refers to gendered conceptions of peace: “until recently, women’s rights in the post-war context seem to have been breached with almost complete impunity” (Pankhurst 2008a, 9). Despite the introduction of ‘zero tolerance’ policies and sensitivity training the issue of peacekeeper exploitation and abuse persists, as does the problem of wilful institutional ignorance on the issue (Laville 2015; Aids Free World 2015). In Timor-Leste there was a perception that peacekeepers that perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse did not face justice and communities struggled with who to report such issues to and what they could reasonably expect to arise from complaints. Thus similar issues associated with conflict periods – militarism, perpetration of gendered violence, impunity, and lack of access to justice – permeate the post-conflict period, and in post-occupation Timor-Leste the militarised UN presence saw the continuation of gendered violence under similar conditions.
Chapter six examined how ‘gender’ is conceptualised in peacebuilding and implemented in practice. Where the preceding chapters on women’s empowerment and women’s security highlighted limited understandings of both empowerment and security, the arguments in each focused more on how the UN presence undermined both, often in unintended ways. Chapter six focused more on limitations in the institutional conceptualisation of ‘gender’, arguing this had implications for policy and thus women’s inclusion in peacebuilding. In her analysis of the different ways in which security and gender can be understood, Laura Shepherd (2010) details a post-structural approach that shifts away from how particular acts are gendered towards how particular acts are gendering. Shepherd’s analysis looks specifically at the act of rape in war, but her examination is still useful in understanding the gendered and gendering nature of peacebuilding. Chapter six therefore examined how the discourse of peacebuilding (and in turn the implementation of this discourse in policy) genders women and men by articulating “specific subjects, ascrib[ing] identities to these subjects and position[ing] them in relation to each other” (Shepherd 2010, 76; see also Harding 1986, 17-18). The chapter argued that the act of incorporating a ‘gender perspective’ into peacebuilding – ostensibly designed to overcome patriarchal power hierarchies and women’s marginalisation – has come to rest on gendered assumptions about what women say, do, think, act and experience, assumptions that are linked to women’s femaleness. In short, peacebuilding (like war) reproduces gender and an explicit ‘gender’ narrative being incorporated into UN peacebuilding has not fundamentally changed its gendering functions.

Demonstrative of this are the roles that women are routinely encouraged to take on in peacebuilding. Using the addition of women to peacekeeping forces as an explicit strategy in managing the potentially harmful behaviour of peacekeepers also speaks to the ‘gendering’ that occurs as part of ‘incorporating a gender perspective’ into peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Shepherd 2011). As with empowerment and the increased visibility of women in the national political realm, adding women peacekeepers to sensitise missions does not challenge underlying gendered identities that constitute and are constituted by militarised peacebuilding. In addition, gender work is marginalised within missions, and there has been little advancement in terms of women’s representation in other areas of the UN’s work (Tiessen 2005). Indeed, the recently appointed High Level Panel to review UN peace operation initially included only three women out of 14 members, an announcement made on the fourteenth anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325 (UN 2014). Following backlash from women’s advocates both within and outside of the UN, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced the addition of three more female panel members (UN Women 2014; Crossette 2014).
As argued throughout this thesis, a fundamental element of the UN’s ‘institutional orthodoxy’ on women and peace is that ‘gender’ has come to refer almost exclusively to women (Charlesworth 2008; see also Hudson 2012b). In turn then, women take on the necessary ‘gendered responsibilities’ of peace operations and come to embody the UN’s commitment to ‘incorporating a gender perspective’. The logic of this orthodoxy appears to be that women offer an inherent and inalienable ‘gendered’ perspective – predominantly on gender/women’s issues – that differ to the neutral (male) mainstream understandings of international security and post-conflict reconstruction. As women continue to be frequently seen only in designated gendered ways, their activities outside of this go largely unnoticed; for example, complete ignorance of women’s peacebuilding activities in Timor-Leste during 2006 crisis period and women’s absence from high level peace dialogues to resolve the crisis. In turn, as women embody gender and gender policy targets women, men’s gendered identities and their constitutive role in international peace and security continues to be overlooked (Hudson 2012b, 91).

Following this examination of peacebuildings gendering function, chapter seven examined more closely what role East Timorese women’s organisations played in the implementation of a gender perspective in Timor-Leste and what this meant for their advocacy. While this too was imbricated with national-local divisions, the role of national level women’s organisations in negotiating around gendered identities should not be overlooked. Drawing on post-colonial perspectives, chapter seven argued that resistance to gender work in Timor-Leste was not solely an expression of patriarchal cultures. Rather, the context of UN peacebuilding and existing rural-urban divisions must also be taken into consideration (Smith 2015). Rural-urban differences are an important consideration as the centralisation of successive peacebuilding missions have done little to ameliorate this divide and indeed the government of Timor-Leste has replicated the UN’s urban focus. The role of national women’s organisations negotiating gender in post-occupation Timor-Leste demonstrates that domestic populations are not merely subjects to the gendered and gendering nature of UN peacebuilding: national women’s organisations themselves are challenging patriarchal gender relations in Timor-Leste.

These arguments have broader implications for the theory and practice of peace operations, beyond the case study of Timor-Leste. First is the operation of gender policy. Through examining empowerment and protection in Timor-Leste this thesis demonstrated that the approach to each is limited in their scope and outcomes. This means that narrow measures are used to evaluate whether women are empowered and protected and what they need to be empowered to do and protected from. The continued perpetration of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers against local women, boys and girls – and the continued
impunity surrounding such crimes (Awori, Lutz & Thapa 2013; Aids Free World 2015; Laville 2015) – significantly undermines the protection element of peacebuilding. In turn, the benefits of implementing the Women, Peace and Security framework do not automatically extend to the broader population of ‘women’. This issue speaks as well to the centralised and top-heavy nature of international peace operations, a common critique in critical security perspectives (Chopra 2002; Pugh 2004; Jabri 2013).

Second is the way in which ‘gender’ is understood in peacebuilding. ‘Gender work’ has become ‘women’s work’, which in turn is marginalised through inadequate funding and support and treated as an ‘add on’. Not only is gender work marginalised, despite growing rhetorical reference to the issue, but treating it as an ‘add on’ forecloses more critical interventions and fails to recognise that the “practices of the UN were already gendered” (Whitworth 2004, 139). An ‘institutional orthodoxy’ on gender and women, found in the dominant narratives of why and how women should be included in peacebuilding, contributes to a lack of internal reflection on the ways in which peacebuilding both constitutes and is constituted by gendered assumptions.

The adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in successive Security Council resolutions represents important developments in acknowledging women’s experiences of conflict and peace, and the necessity of their participation in peace and security, yet there remain crucial shortcomings in the dominant liberal perspectives that characterise the institutional approach to gender inclusive peacebuilding. The gendered and gendering functions of liberal peacebuilding reinforces binary gender understandings that have historically seen women subordinated to men and their experiences marginalised in traditional security narratives. To improve the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda this thesis ultimately argues that the UN take seriously both women and gender as essential components of peacebuilding, which includes incorporating gender perspectives that consider the construction of both masculinity and femininity in different locales, and, perhaps separately from ‘gender’, addressing the specific marginalisation of women from peacebuilding. In addition, the research presented here suggests the need for UN recognition of women’s heterogeneous experiences and interests and their agency, as well as institutional acknowledgment of their own role in perpetuating dualist gender norms that delimit women’s role in liberal peacebuilding.
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Appendix 1: Evidence of human research ethics clearance

To: Assoc Prof Michael Leach/Ms Sarah Smith, FLSS

Dear Michael and Sarah

SUHREC Project 2012/083 Exploring liberal values in peacebuilding missions: A case study of Timor-Leste Assoc Prof Michael Leach, Ms Sarah Smith; FLSS Approved Duration: 15/06/2012 To 28/02/2015 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). The responses to the review, as emailed on 6 June 2012 (with attached revised research protocol), were put to the SUHREC delegate for consideration. I also acknowledge receipt of the translated (Tetun) consent forms and consent information statements as emailed on the 12 June 2012.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project may proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Sheila
for Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC
### Appendix 2: Interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int. No.</th>
<th>Participant. Interview location</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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**Group interviews**

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</table>
Appendix 3: Interview themes and questions

**Themes**

Perception of UN in Timor-Leste
- Generally
- Gender policies
- Impact on women specifically – what impact and on which women.

Peace in Timor-Leste
- What is it, what does it mean, is it achieved, how can it be achieved, who works towards peace and how, is it the same for everyone.

Challenges to implementing gender programs in Timor-Leste
- For international stakeholders
- For national stakeholders

Women’s organisations working with the UN to implement gender policy
- For international stakeholders, which organisations they worked with, their perception of those organisations.
- For national stakeholders, how the UN supported their activities, consistent relationship

Development indicators in Timor-Leste
- Generally and for women specifically, gender in/equality

Relationship between UN and women’s organisations
Changes/differences over time

**Sample questions**

(Semi-structured, tailored to the participant’s area of expertise)

Key gender concerns for your unit?

What challenges are there for improved gender equality in Timor-Leste?

Does your organisation/unit engage with any other organisations?

Do programs focus on any particular district in Timor-Leste? If so, why?

In your opinion, what are some of the key issues for peacebuilding in Timor-Leste today?

In your opinion, what are the key gender issues in Timor-Leste today?

In your opinion, what are some of the key issues facing women in Timor-Leste today?

Have peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste impacted women and men differently? Can you explain your answer?

What opportunities have arisen for women specifically through peacebuilding in Timor-Leste?

How have women benefited from peacebuilding in Timor-Leste?

How would you judge the current mission (UNMIT)? How did you judge previous missions?

What do you see as the biggest challenges for the transition period (UNMIT withdrawal)?
Publications
